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Barbara Gwynne

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BARBARA GWYNNE

BARBARA GWYNNE

(LIFE)

BY

W. B. TRITES



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BARBARA GWYNNE

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I

JEROME S. MCWADE, "grocery clerk," dominated the little shop. In and out among his patrons, now after onions, now after starch, he darted with a sure agility. The gaze of a half-dozen women and children followed his trained movements, and like a juggler he kept afloat in the air before him eggs, lemons, cabbages, tins of tomatoes, bars of soap.

Tall, robust and pale, he smiled eternally. A pencil was stuck behind his ear, and a white apron, very smooth and taut about the loins, enveloped him from breast to knee. His blue eyes were quick and sharp. His Roman features, the aquiline nose, firm mouth, square chin, gave him a showy comeliness. He needed shaving badly, and he bore himself with a very jaunty air.

The June morning was awful in its sultry heat,

but Jerome S. McWade, tearing about with the skill and speed of an acrobat on a cramped stage, was happy. Work made him happy always. Work meant to him, however, only over-reaching, only legal theft. And the sincere happiness that radiated from his smile, being mistaken by every one for unselfish good-will, helped him to persuade patron after patron to reject the better articles they really wanted, and to buy instead the worse ones on which he got a good commission.

There came a lull in trade at last, and Jerome wiped his wet brow with his apron, took a chew of tobacco, and resumed his study of the cash register, a new contrivance that he believed could be outwitted.

"Always on the make, Jerome!"

He abandoned hurriedly the bright machine.

"Always on the make," repeated Annie Johnson. A smile, parting her shrunken lips, revealed her large false teeth. "Give me a box of Thekla insect powder."

Foisting on her the spurious Thackara powder, he explained rather anxiously to the gossip:

"The cash register people offer a reward to anybody that can beat their machine. I was just looking the works over, Mrs. Johnson; that was all."

"Now, Jerome!"

"That was all—honest!"

They laughed enigmatically. Then, about to confer a favour, the gossip, her clenched fists on her hips, regarded the young man with shrewd approval.

"Have you heard the latest about Barbara Gwynne, Jerome?"

His smile vanished, a worried look succeeded it. "No," he muttered.

"You knew she went to the theatre with young Chew last night?"

He moistened his dry lips. "Yes?"

"Well, they drove home through the park in a closed cab!"

"Maybe," he said, "they missed the train."

"Of course they'll say they missed the train," sniffed Annie Johnson. "If anybody'll believe them!"

"I'll believe them!" cried Jerome. "You ought to believe them, too." And suddenly his flat, nasal voice rose high in shrill appeal. "Just look back at yourself now. Just look back at yourself when you were a girl of eighteen, Mrs. Johnson. Maybe you did a lot of reckless things then, too. I'll bet you did, a pretty girl like you were! But was there any harm in it? Was there now?"

His falsetto whine amazed the woman.

"Why, Jerome, you ain't in love with her, are you?"

"Me in love with her!"

But for a long time after Annie Johnson's departure Jerome S. McWade was not himself. He served his patrons slowly and feebly, like a very old man; a frown wrinkled his brow; when alone he gazed out of the window sadly.

The Rev. George Harper, dropping in for six yards of clothes-line, was startled by his languor.

"Is it the heat, Brother McWade?"

"Oh, no."

And he shook off his gloom, he tied up the clothes-line with almost magical speed and skill. "And what else, Dr. Harper?"

"Nothing else, I thank you, Brother McWade."

Mr. Harper strode to the door, his loose, thin garments of black alpaca shimmering and fluttering.

"Oh, by the way," he said, as he put up his sunshade, "you must join our whistling league."

"Whistling league?"

Mr. Harper's large mouth opened wide, emitting a cultivated and sonorous laugh. "We meet in the church parlour at seven-thirty this evening. Don't fail us, brother."

"But——"

"Not a word of explanation until then!"

Another sonorous laugh, and Mr. Harper ventured forth into the terrible sunshine of Green Lane. With cautious steps he ascended the hill. His long,

clean-shaven upper lip looked very white by contrast with his curly black beard. His raiment fluttered about him, lustrous as silk. His alpaca trousers were so flimsy that through them, in certain strong lights, the leg itself was visible.

Suddenly Mr. Harper started, smiled, and returned to the shop.

"Brother McWade!"

"Yes, sir?"

"I have been thinking—if you would care to mention our whistling league to the editor—not, be it understood, as coming direct from me——"

"I'll let him know," said Jerome. "It will be a fine ad. for Ebenezer."

"I thank you."

Alone once more, the grocery clerk sighed heavily. He took another chew of tobacco. Then his melancholy eye, chancing upon the cash register, lit up again with interest. Jerome, deep in little cogs, started at Mrs. Woodford's entrance.

"Good-morning. Have you got any beeswax?"

"Good-morning. Yes, ma'am. Certainly."

And he selected a cake of that brand of beeswax which owed least to the bee.

"I want two ounces, please," said Mrs. Woodford. "I guess you don't carry rosewater and almond oil?"

"No, ma'am; we don't stock them." He bent

over the counter chivalrously. "But we can get them for you?" he cooed.

"Oh, it's not worth while," said Mrs. Woodford. "It's just a cream I'm making."

"A cream?"

She flushed. She was a woman of thirty-five. Her figure was beautiful, and with daring coquetry the cheap gown revealed all her figure's gracious lines. But there was that in her face—a certain heavy and stiff quality, a sexless quality—which doomed her to be undesirable to men.

"What kind of a cream?" the grocery clerk persisted.

"A massage cream. A skin food. It's the latest thing. Haven't you seen it advertised?"

"Yes, I believe I have. But isn't the recipe a secret?"

"I have a friend," Mrs. Woodford answered, "in the Oriental Cream place. She told me how to make it."

"How is it done?"

His persistence vexed her; nevertheless she said good-humouredly:

"You take two ounces of beeswax, four ounces of almond oil, and four ounces of rosewater; you melt the wax in the oil, and then you lift your pot off the fire and stir in the rosewater gently. That's all. It's ever so much cheaper to make than to buy."

"The idea!" said Jerome. He had listened with an intent frown, engraving the recipe upon his memory. Sure now that it was well etched in, he resumed his professional glitter. "Anything else to-day, Mrs. Woodford?"

"Half a dozen eggs, please."

"McWade new-laids?"

"No," she answered. "Just store eggs this time."

After her departure he examined his stock of McWade eggs with grave care, peering through them towards the light, and in far too many cases shaking his head and muttering, "Damn that Bill Stroud." Then he resumed his study of the cash register.

Though the shop remained open until ten, an evening off was never denied Jerome. He took this evening off, and having finished his supper of cold soup-meat, fried potatoes, stewed prunes and cup-cake, washed down with a pint of boiling *café-au-lait,* he borrowed a small oil-stove from the "hired girl" and retreated to his room.

In the still twilight his room was stifling. He threw off his outer garments, and in undershirt and drawers began to trot softly in his stocking feet about the little chamber.

He untied a number of packages. The first was a jar of Oriental Cream. He studied the cream

closely. He smelt it. He touched it with his forefinger.

"Fat and cologne," he said.

The other packages contained the ingredients of Oriental Cream as Mrs. Woodford had recounted them to him. He lighted the oil-stove, and, following Mrs. Woodford's directions, he put the beeswax and the almond oil in a tin pot on the fire.

Slowly the white cake of wax melted above the flame, melted and mingled with the almond oil in a clear, amber-coloured fluid.

"So far so good," said Jerome.

And he extinguished the fire, set the tin pot on his dressing-table, and emptied into it the vial of rosewater.

"Gee!"

It was like magic. The rosewater, as it fell into the hot mixture of oil and wax, formed little white curls, little white worms, little white balls; and in a flash these wriggling shapes all united in one white mass—a mass surrounded by a fluid that had now somehow lost its amber hue, that had now somehow diminished, too, by seventy or eighty per cent. The dish before him resembled a dumpling in a thin, scant sauce.

"Hell!"

He snatched his penknife, opened it, and began to stir vigorously with the blade. But the colourless

sauce refused to combine with the hard white dumpling. Still he stirred on. The summer night closed round him. Sweat dripped into his eyes. He lit the gas, and drawing down the blind with one hand, stirred with the other. In vain. The liquid and the solid refused absolutely to unite in a smooth cream, and the young man in his disappointment and rage lifted up the pot to hurl it across the room. Prudence, however, restrained him, and, dressing again, he hastened out.

Up Green Lane he strode in the soft June night. A faint air stirred the maple leaves. The sky was a glancing splendour of clear stars.

Jerome, as he mopped continually his face and hands and neck, advanced between two parallel lines of cheap brick houses. Each brick house had a tiny flight of white marble steps before its narrow door, and on each flight of steps a girl and a lad sat side by side. To left and right in his progress he saluted that host of amorists politely. He walked amid their soft laughter, amid the murmur of their young voices, as in a very bath of love.

The west class-room of Ebenezer was brilliantly illuminated, and forth from the open windows poured the strange, shrill sound of a multitude of persons whistling "Beulah Land" together with all their might. Jerome smiled, but kept on his way.

Barbara Gwynne

Seated on her doorstep, Mrs. Woodford looked up in surprise when he stopped before her, and she rose hurriedly.

"Won't you come in, Jerome?"

"No; I'll just stand here a minute.'

"Isn't it hot?" she sighed. "You might as well come in."

Her voice was sweet and tremulous. She was almost pretty in the starlight. Her white dress clung to her; the bodice, cut a little low, revealed her throat's soft beauty. But he regarded her with accusing eyes.

"I want to speak to you about that Oriental Cream."

"Oh." Mrs. Woodford's voice changed. "Well, what about it?"

"You didn't tell me how to make it right."

"Of course I did. Why are you so interested in it, anyway?"

"I tried to make it according to your recipe, and it was no good at all."

"But what interest——"

"No good at all," he repeated. "Half water and half wax." His voice rose in anger. "It wouldn't mix!"

She interrogated him. She soon discovered the mistake he had made. And she explained good-humouredly that his vial of rosewater should have

been added very slowly, drop by drop, to the hot wax and oil; she explained that, poured in all at once, it had caused too sudden a hardening of the compound.

Then she brought out a flagon of cream that she had made herself in the afternoon. He touched and smelt it; he pronounced it a success.

"But you didn't get all this," he said, "out of ten ounces of raw material?"

"Yes, I did."

"And one little jar of Oriental Cream costs a dollar! There must be a dozen jars here."

"Oh, I'm sure there must."

"Well, this beats chicken-farming."

In his excitement he rubbed the bristles on cheek and chin. The bristles gave forth a harsh, rasping sound, as of the wind in withered leaves.

"What sound was that?" cried Mrs. Woodford, startled.

He pretended not to hear her. "There's money in this," he said.

"Is there?" she returned indifferently.

"I'll give you a dollar," he said, "if you'll make me a hundred jars of this cream."

She looked interested, pleased, for she was very poor. "All right, thanks," she agreed.

And now a busy and exciting week ensued for the young man. He believed that his chance, so long

awaited, his chance to launch out and grow rich, was at last come. To be sure, he had often believed that his chance was come before. Nevertheless, with religious zeal, he set to work.

He bought a hundred jars of white porcelain and a hundred labels inscribed "Zenobia Massage Cream," and he pasted the labels on the jars one evening in his room. He bought twenty ounces of highly adulterated beeswax and forty ounces each of highly adulterated almond oil and rosewater, and Mrs. Woodford made him a large pail of Zenobia Cream. He inserted a very black advertisement, enclosed in a very black border, in the local paper, and this advertisement, thanks to its extreme blackness, stood out splendidly; it sold in a week the hundred jars at fifty cents a jar.

The total cost of each jar was nine cents, the chemists paid thirty-five cents; profit, twenty-six cents.

Twenty-six dollars profit in one week!

"This beats chicken-farming," cried Jerome.

And he set down his wheelbarrow at Mrs. Woodford's door. He began to unload beeswax, almond oil and rosewater in really alarming quantities.

II

LIKE a battlefield Cinnaminson resounded all night long with fire-crackers. At dawn, fatigued at last, the patriots in the saloons put out their punk and staggered home; but promptly at dawn the little boys of Cinnaminson, leaping from their beds, renewed the hideous hubbub. And surgeons in white, just as on a battlefield, sped continually hither and yon to minister to hands blown off, to eyes burnt out. It was the Fourth.

Jerome S. McWade, paler than usual, for he had not slept, rose early.

With a dismal yawn he strode in his immense nightshirt to the window. Casey's bartender was sweeping from the tavern sidewalk heaps of fluffy scarlet stuff, the débris of innumerable cannon-crackers. Jerome had heard the report of all those crackers, of all without exception. But he would hardly have been able to sleep anyway on account of the heat. Even now, now in the blue dawn, the air was stale. His limbs and body under the long gown were dripping even now.

He passed a wet towel over his jaded flesh, and set about the careful toilet demanded by the day.

Lifting his mattress, he drew from beneath it the trousers that his weight night after night had admirably creased. He polished his shoes with a patent liquid blacking of which he held the local agency. He took up his soiled rubber collar and soiled rubber cuffs—he was the Cinnaminson representative of a rubber novelty firm—and dipping an old toothbrush in water, with a few strokes he restored to the artificial linen all its snowy effulgence. Then he dressed rapidly.

He dressed rapidly in a blue coat, a pink shirt, and black and white check trousers sustained—he wore no waistcoat—by both belt and braces. So attired, he regarded himself in the glass with pleasure. A small hat of black straw slanted jauntily over his left temple. A shave, perhaps. . . The two days' beard rustled as he touched it thoughtfully, and the young man hurried down to breakfast.

Long before seven, the hour the Sunday school parades were to begin, the Main Street's two sidewalks were choked with the young fathers and mothers of Cinnaminson, craning their necks, standing on tiptoe, smiling with foolish delight in the thought that they would soon see their little sons and daughters march by.

Barbara Gwynne

The green hillside was bathed in morning sunshine, and down the hillside from the hilltop churches, by this lane and by that, the seven parades of white-clad children at last moved slowly riverward. The blare of their bands sounded faint and clear below. Banners waved. Brass glinted in the sun. Those seven white processions in their winding descent resembled a herd of dragonlike monsters crawling down green slopes in fairyland.

Amid hurrahs the Catholic parade entered the Main Street. It marched between two low walls of people, between two high walls of bunting-covered house-fronts. The bunting billowed, the people cheered, and the Catholic parade was deemed the finest that Cinnaminson had ever seen.

Its marshals, got up as Lafayettes, Washingtons and Uncle Sams, rode lumbering steeds that all the week they drove to carts or drays. Its band wore the feathers, paint and fringed buckskin of Indian chiefs. And the midsummer sun beat on the parade fiercely, revealing without pity the patches and stains on faded cotton velvet, and the lines of sweat crawling down powdered faces.

But the hot sun could detract nothing from the charm of the children, the mile of children, marching gravely, two by two, to patriotic music. The little girls were in white, they carried flags and banners, and they wore on the hip a bright tincup

hung from a red, white and blue ribbon. The little boys had tincups, too; many bore toy guns and swords; tiny epaulettes and plumes were to be seen.

Jerome S. McWade, bowing to left and right, rode at the head of Ebenezer's parade on Dapple, the tremendous bay mare that drew his employer's market wagon. Dapple had a collar of laurel about her thick neck. Her tail and mane were plaited with narrow red, white and blue ribbon in many infinitesimal plaits. She danced and curvetted to the music, and from the marshal's baton in her rider's hand long streamers of red, white and blue flowed out upon the air. A superb picture. . . But Jerome's left trouser kept slipping up. Up and up it slipped, almost to the knee. It exposed his sock, a glimpse of pale, plump, hairy leg, a patent garter of which he was the agent. Suddenly aware of this deplorable accident, the young man with a frown rose in the stirrups and pushed the trouser hastily down. Then from his high seat he resumed his gallant bows and smiles, and the trouser resumed its stealthy upward way.

The Ebenezer parade crossed Green Lane Bridge and toiled in sun and dust out the River Road to Jones's Woods. A young woman was overcome by the heat near the paper mill; they carried her, white and rigid, into a cottage. . . Jones's Woods at last. How cool and green under the trees after

the long, hot march! The children, bursting from the ranks, ran to and fro with shrill whoops.

Scattered through the wood were benches of new pine, one for each class. The classes took their allotted benches, the teachers with lemonade buckets and sandwich baskets descended to the magazine, and side by side the pupils awaited the first of the day's five meals. But in the magazine, a square, unroofed enclosure in the shade of three oaks, the purveyors, slicing great hams, opening rolls, and stirring washtubs of lemonade, were already far behindhand.

Jerome, in pink shirtsleeves, stood at the magazine counter of rough pine, and from him a long line of teachers with buckets and baskets extended far back into the wood. On his right was a sandwich barrel, on his left a lemonade tub. His bare forearms were as white as a woman's and as muscular as a blacksmith's.

"Jerome," said Annie Johnson, as he filled her bucket with lemonade, "Barbara Gwynne and Chew were at Island Park last night."

"Were they?"

"Barbara was drinking."

"I don't believe it."

He did not believe it, but his hands, laden with sandwiches, shook. . .

The first meal over at last, the little boys rushed from the cool wood out into the blazing meadow to

play ball. Under the trees the little girls strolled arm in arm. The teachers, seated on the benches of pale, sweet-smelling pine, conversed quietly. And the urchins of the infant class, the children of five or six years, were everywhere, stumbling busily, gravely, down vast green forest vistas, trudging shoulder deep, like gnomes, among the ferns.

So the morning passed. There was never much excitement in the morning.

But in the afternoon the wood filled with the older members of Ebenezer, and by means of rough games and music the new-comers built up gradually a spirit of feverish gaiety in the grove. A spirit of feverish and unwholesome gaiety, growing and growing, becoming finally a delirium wherein these middle-aged persons would manifest in strange and ugly ways a thwarted sexual excitement.

In the magazine Jerome, now flourishing a knife a yard long, sliced Dutch cake with wonderful accuracy and speed. But suddenly, like a hunting dog, he stood motionless, passionately absorbed in something far off.

A high cart, red and glittering, had swung into the wood. It was driven by a young man in white flannels, beside whom, in a muslin frock, sat a girl of singular beauty.

"Good-afternoon, Barbara. How are you, Mr. Chew?"

Barbara Gwynne

The high red cart halted near the magazine. The tiny groom skipped to the grey's tossing head. Elisha Chew, 3rd, placed his long-lashed whip slowly in its socket; and, as he threw the fawn-coloured apron from his knees, he surveyed with calm eyes the gay and crowded wood.

"Good-afternoon, Barbara. Good-afternoon, Mr. Chew."

Chew nodded. His nod was an insult. But the beautiful girl beside him smiled her radiant smile.

She was so beautiful that all men's eyes brightened to behold her. She was so beautiful that in her presence all men's faces became a little nobler. Her beauty, like divine music, caressed and fortified the soul.

And Jerome, hurriedly slipping on his rubber cuffs, went to her as the steel goes to the magnet.

"I was afraid you weren't coming," he said.

"Mr. Chew drove me over," the young girl answered.

She put out her slim foot in its white shoe; he had a confused glimpse of white silk hose, of thin ankles, and Barbara descended as nimbly as a boy from her high seat.

"Oh, we're only staying an hour or so."

Chew, as he spoke, allowed his gaze to linger on Jerome's toilet, allowed a sneer to curl his lip. But the sneer was wasted on Jerome. Jerome's

eyes, bright and wistful, saw Barbara Gwynne alone.

"Did you get that cream I sent you, Barbara?" he asked gently.

"Oh, yes, thanks."

"What cream was that?" Chew inquired.

Deaf to the question, oblivious of Chew's very presence, he began to praise his Zenobia Cream volubly. The young girl had to interrupt him to answer her companion.

"Jerome has given me," she said, "a dozen jars of his new skin food. It's going to make him rich, you know."

"That's what it is. It pays me double my salary in the shop already. I tell you——"

He boasted on interminably, beside himself with happiness, and Elisha Chew, 3rd, American aristocrat and millionaire, regarded him with a sneer so icy, so contemptuous, that he would assuredly have been cut to the heart had he perceived it. But he perceived nothing save Barbara; and as he talked on and on to Barbara—talked of his Zenobia Cream, his chicken farm, his patent blacking—he edged in quite unconsciously between Chew and her. Unconsciously shouldering Chew aside, he usurped his place. And as he stood in Chew's place, laughing and talking, his broad back like a wall hid Barbara from Chew's sight.

The band began noisily and unevenly to blare

"The Star-Spangled Banner," and Jerome set his palm beneath the young girl's elbow.

"We'll go further off," he said. "You can't hear yourself think here."

Clasping her elbow courteously, he led her up the knoll. The next moment, however, he stopped and turned. He had forgotten Chew.

"Come on, Mr. Chew!" he cried.

Barbara looked back. Chew, toiling on behind, glared up at them in haughty and contemptuous silence. She made for his benefit a grimace of amused disdain towards Jerome. But there was mischief in her violet eyes. If Jerome amused her, perhaps Chew amused her too.

From the top of the knoll they saw the Rev. George Harper rushing about below.

"He is getting his whistling league together," said the grocery clerk.

Mr. Harper, in fact, had begun to collect the league immediately on perceiving the editor of the *Cinnaminson Scimitar* among the afternoon arrivals. With theatrical gaiety he hurried from group to group. His diaphanous alpaca raiment flapped. His large mouth opened wide to emit his hollow laugh. His bright black eye shot glance after glance towards the editor.

"What is this whistling league?" said Chew.

"Here is the idea," Jerome explained. "A lot of

promiscuous whistling goes on, but it does no good, because only dance tunes and so forth are whistled. Well, the whistling league is to teach us all to whistle hymns. We are to whistle hymns in the street, before saloons, everywhere. These hymns, Mr. Harper thinks, will bring souls to God."

"Mr. Harper is a fool," Chew scoffed.

"He gets his name in the paper," said the young girl, with a knowing smile.

The league burst into "Rock of Ages."

"I thought of going to Island Park last night," said Jerome.

"Why, we were there," cried Barbara. "The music and the fireworks were lovely."

"There's a lot of drinking goes on there, I understand."

She laughed. "I had a glass of wine myself, Jerome."

He fell into profound meditation, and Chew, grasping the opportunity, came from behind his broad back and said to Barbara significantly:

"Shall we move on?"

But Jerome moved on with them, still meditating, through the gay wood.

"Lots of people drink," he finally announced. "Your mother, now, Mr. Chew . . . a glass of claret, eh. . ."

He hesitated, fearing to offend.

Chew sneered. "Every one drinks at table."

Jerome became himself again at once. In his high spirits he unconsciously shut Chew off from Barbara as before; and at the least obstruction or difficulty—a pebble in the path, an orange peel to circle—his palm beneath the young girl's elbow sustained her with the finest Cinnaminson gallantry.

A sudden shriek, and Annie Johnson ran by them down the knoll at breakneck speed upon the arm of Deacon Kirk. The fat, elderly woman's face was brick-red. Her mouth hung open. A rat-tail of greyish hair fell over her eye. She laughed and panted, laughed and panted, as in hysteria. She seemed doomed to burst a blood-vessel.

Barbara frowned. "Ugh! Horrid!"

Annie Johnson and the deacon disappeared among the trees. They were running in a race, a race of grandfathers and grandmothers; and Annie would assuredly have won this race, but as she neared the goal she fell and could not rise again. A soft and shapeless mass of fat, hysterically laughing and screaming, she floundered in her white dress on the grass like a great fish just landed. Her ankle was broken, and an ambulance took her home.

"What book are you reading, Barbara?" said Jerome.

Her beauty intoxicated him. He could hardly keep his huge hands off her. Like white birds anx-

ious to alight, they hovered continually about her shoulders, her arms, her waist. And now he took the book solely in order to touch her long, cool fingers.

"It's 'The Unhappy Boy,'" she answered.

"Why, that's a play!"

"But I love plays. Some day I'm going to be an actress."

She glanced at Chew with a delicate and tormenting smile; but Chew's haughty air did not change, and her smile faded.

A feverish uproar, as of a horde of maniacs, drew them down into the valley again. There, in a hideous "follow-my-leader," twenty-five or thirty middle-aged couples, urged on by the cries of a hundred middle-aged spectators, ran arm-in-arm, one behind the other, singing breathlessly:

"We'll buy a horse and steal a gig,
And round the world we'll have a jig,
And I'll do all that ever I can
To follow the steps of the Looney Man!"

Suddenly the leaders of the rout waved, as they ran, their free hands in the air. Then all the singing, shrieking, leaping couples behind them waved their own free hands in like wise.

The Looney Man,
The Looney Man!
I'll follow the steps of the Looney Man!

On they rushed, stumbling over the uneven turf, zigzagging among the old, calm, beautiful trees. Their hands tossing above their heads seemed the last assurance of their hopeless madness.

And I'll do all that ever I can
To follow the steps of the Looney Man!

Now the leading couple half leapt, half scrambled, over a fallen trunk of considerable size. Terrific screams greeted the feat, and the couples behind charged the trunk like a troop of decrepit cavalry.

The men's singing faces wore devil-may-care looks, their thin grey hair stood in disordered tufts on their bony heads. The breathless women staggered, their eyes rolled here and there, and they shrieked hideously.

Over the great trunk they scrambled, the male and female of each pair leaning, like drunkards, heavily on one another. Sometimes a woman fell; she drew her companion down with her; the two floundered in hopeless entanglement on the grass.

Barbara's lip curled. "Oh, I think it's horrid!" she cried. "Why do you laugh?" And she frowned at her young men.

Jerome at once stopped laughing. "It's going to rain," he said.

The air, in fact, had grown heavier hour by hour; and now deep violet clouds obscured the July sun.

Under her white bodice Barbara's slim bosom rose and fell. With her little handkerchief she wiped tiny beads from the delicate flesh of lip and forehead. "I hope," she panted, "it does rain. I can hardly breathe."

"We had better go," said Chew.

"No; you'll be drenched. Stay under cover till the storm is over." And Jerome led them to the ice-cream booth.

On the way a cold wind engulfed them. They shivered. The trees in the blast waved rhythmically their green plumes. The road below was tormented like a stream; higher and higher rose its dust waves; soon it resembled a cloud rather than a road. A few enormous raindrops fell.

"Hurry!" cried Barbara; and wrenching her elbow from Jerome's grasp, she ran lightly through the storm-swept wood.

In tattered and transparent sheets fell the torrential rain. The thunder crashed murderously in their ears, then rolled with mild grumblings far away. A zigzag of violet fire ran down the sky, and the wet wood burst suddenly into violet light.

But in the booth they were comfortable enough till other picnickers, drenched to the skin, crowded in on them. The canvas roof began to leak, and the other picnickers fled distractedly, pressing in tight

circles about the trunks of trees. But Barbara and her two young men crouched under the counter.

There it was dry, but the heat was stifling. Their cramped attitudes tortured their muscles. Chew, against whose arm Jerome's great shoulder pressed, suddenly gave the latter a push that caused him to lose his balance and sit down on the wet floor outside.

Bewildered, yet polite, Jerome stammered from his puddle pleasantly:

"Why—why did you——"

But Chew's harsh laugh told him that the push had been a deliberate insult.

Thereupon he rose, and, mechanically releasing with thumb and finger the wet trouser-seat glued to his flesh, he looked sternly down at Chew huddled under the counter beside Barbara.

"You're no gentleman!"

"Oh, clear out! You've hung about here long enough, you mucker!"

Silence. Both young men glanced at Barbara. She was still and calm. She looked neither at the one nor at the other. But she seemed to be listening with attention, even with interest. There was no alarm in her beautiful eyes.

"Mucker? I'm as good as you are."

"Clear out, you mucker!"

"I'm a mucker, am I?" Jerome shook his forefinger at Chew. "And you're a big-bug, eh?

Well, this is a free country, Mr. Chew. We're all born equal here."

"Dry up!"

"No, I won't dry up——"

"Clear out! We're sick of the sight of you!"

"'We're'? Do you, too, want me to go, Barbara?"

The young girl looked at him. Her gaze studied him curiously, calmly, intelligently. He was so big and strong, a giant beside Chew, it was rather nice of him to make no use of threats or violence. "You see, Jerome," she said, "I came with——"

"I'll go." His voice rose to its shrill, plaintive key. "But I tell you what, Mr. Chew. If Barbara prefers you to me, it ain't because you're a big-bug and I'm a mucker. It's because she thinks you're a better man than I am."

He lifted the black straw hat and turned away. Barbara said:

"Good-bye, Jerome, and thank you for the cream."

"You're welcome," he answered sadly.

And he stalked out into the tempest. The rain deluged his gaudy finery. The thunder leapt upon him. The lightning flashed in his eyes its terrible flame.

But Jerome, unmindful of the storm, walked through the drenched and writhing wood with slow steps and bowed head.

III

In September he opened his beauty parlour, two spacious rooms down town, delicately gay in white and rose. Mrs. Woodford was his operator, cashier, almost factotum.

Annie Johnson's story of his discharge from the grocery was false. He resigned from the grocery. But he himself admitted that his resignation may have forestalled—who knows? . . .

For the old grocer had repeatedly pointed out that Zenobia Cream and McWade eggs occupied the best places in the little shop. The old grocer's complaints were just, and after each of them Jerome hurriedly retired his crates and pots into the dingiest corner. But little by little, as time passed, he brought them forward again almost unconsciously. For Jerome, in the pursuit of commercial success, could not help forgetting the old grocer, just as he could not help forgetting Elisha Chew, 3rd, in the pursuit of amorous success on the Fourth of July.

Barbara Gwynne

It was time to resign. His August profit from Zenobia Cream had been a hundred and twenty-eight dollars.

Yet only sixteen pharmacies were working for him. Suppose sixteen hundred, suppose sixteen thousand pharmacies were working for him!

He chuckled excitedly. "I'm a fool," he said, as he packed in yellow bags an order of rice and prunes. "It's too easy money." And pouring coffee into the splendid scarlet mill, he spun the great wheel so fast that it became a blue-grey mist.

The old grocer, bathed in sweat, descended from the loft where, on a heap of dirty potato-bags, amid tropical sunshine and a loud buzz of flies, he had taken his afternoon nap. A pyramid of Zenobia Cream stood in the centre of the counter, and a crate of McWade eggs, tilted against a barrel, nearly blocked the shop entrance. The old man kicked the crate. He shouted:

"I'll fire you if ever again——"

But Jerome, looking up from a calculation that promised him a profit of thirty thousand dollars a week, said hurriedly:

"I resign, boss."

Mrs. Woodford a month before had given up her dressmaking to devote herself to his interests. She was on a salary, and in her little house in Wabash

Avenue the dressmaking litter had been succeeded by a litter of small white pots, boxes of labels, stencils, packing-cases, tall bottles.

Here, all day long, she worked alone. In the early morning she fused oil, wax and rosewater in a porcelain-lined kettle; the rest of the day she spent in labelling the little pots and in filling them with the smooth, white, perfumed cream. In the solitude and silence of her small house she worked cheerfully, her supple movements full of vigour and grace. But sometimes a frown ruffled her calm brow, and she would stand idle before her table, an erect and robust figure, gazing at the wall with perplexed eyes. If at eighteen she had known what she would be at thirty-five, perhaps she would have killed herself. . . Work, work and self-denial, that was her life. Since Harvey Woodford's desertion nine years ago she had remained unswervingly industrious, frugal, good. Why? . . . Banker Treves, when she was sewing for his young wife. . . But Banker Treves was such an old man. . . Well, a little longer, and she herself would be an old woman. Then would she deem these frugal, chaste years of self-denial well spent? . . . or would she deem them wasted? . . . Horrible thoughts . . . and with an impatient shrug, taking up her brush again, she sealed pot after pot swiftly.

The beauty parlour was her own idea, and she

rather expected to be a partner in it. It demanded a little detective work at first, and she spent three pleasant days in visiting all the beauty parlours of the town. She was manicured, shampooed, steamed, curled, massaged, and she asked many artless questions. Prodigious was the information she thus acquired. . . A line, too, a line running from the side of her left nostril down to the corner of her mouth, surely became much fainter. Strange that no one spoke of it! Her perfect faith in beauty parlours dated from this time.

Jerome left to her the decoration of the rooms, and their pink and white harmony was only marred by the umbrella-stand, a frog of yellowish porcelain, bigger than a trunk, into the vast red cavern of whose open mouth it was almost sickening to thrust an umbrella. He, however, liked the frog. He had bought it at the last moment. "It breaks the sameness," he explained, with a deprecatory gesture towards the white and rose of paper, curtains, carpet and upholstery.

Though on opening day he had not intended to appear, he made two visits before noon. Silence, solitude, even a little gloom possessed the beauty parlour.

On his return after luncheon, he heard at last a murmur of voices. He tiptoed to the door. Mrs. Woodford moved skilfully about the operating

chair, wherein a woman in black reclined, her hair hanging, a greyish tail, down to the carpet.

"The baggy look under the eyes——"

He started, recognising the voice of Mrs. Chew, whom he had often served in the grocery.

"Not in one treatment!" Mrs. Woodford laughed at the preposterous idea. "But if you'll take a full course ticket——"

"How much?" said Mrs. Chew.

"A hundred dollars for the twenty treatments."

"Well, send me one. In a plain envelope, you know."

Mrs. Woodford dipped her fingertips in a tiny tray of Zenobia Cream. With outstretched hands she approached the woman in the chair capably. She had, he noted, the air of a distinguished surgeon, of a fashionable barber, an air inspiring confidence and hope.

"Where did you learn the business?"

"I studied Lilia's and Fontaine's methods, but a correspondence course was what helped me most."

Mrs. Chew, as the massage went on, praised the eloquence of the Rev. George Harper. She praised his eloquence a long time. Then she praised his beauty.

"He has lovely eyes," assented Mrs. Woodford.

"And such a delicate skin, like a girl's."

"A fine physique, too."

"A manly man. . ." And after a pause Mrs. Chew repeated, tenderly, rhythmically, as if it had been a line from a well-loved poem, "A manly man."

To hear women praising the beauty of the Rev. George Harper, with his black whiskers and his flapping raiment, at once amused and disgusted Jerome. He slipped out.

On his return at five Mrs. Woodford was alone.

"We must get," she said, "a good hair-drier. Mrs. Chew was awfully annoyed."

He threw himself in one of the great pink and white chairs.

"I never thought Mrs. Chew cared anything about her looks," he said. "I guess she's gone on Harper."

He laughed scornfully, and Mrs. Woodford began to praise facial massage. The theory was that, the face being always held in a vertical position, its flesh inevitably sagged down. To correct this sagging, a rotary upward massage was required. A rotary upward massage, applied to the face of an old woman, would draw the flaccid and wrinkled flesh up to its proper place again, would fasten it there, would give it a smooth, firm surface.

"A big thing, massage," he mused.

And bidding her massage his own face, he reclined in the operating chair, a "woman's page"

from the *Sunday Press* in his hand, while over his countenance, thickly coated with Zenobia Cream, her firm fingers plied with a rustling sound.

"Your beard——"

"Yes, I know I need a shave," said he.

The massage was soothing, pleasant. He closed his eyes. . . Aromatic waters in a fine mist cooled the glowing flesh. Toilet vinegars made the skin tingle and burn. . .

"It's fine," he said at the end. "You do it fine." And he smiled at his reflection in the mirror. "Too much make-up for a man, though."

"Not for a middle-aged woman," said Mrs. Woodford, quickly. "Her eyes are not as sharp as yours."

"The main idea," he mused, "is to give the face a hot, puffy feeling, and to top off with a showy make-up."

IV

BARBARA'S alarm clock awakened her in her narrow bed at six, and she extended her limbs and opened in a yawn a mouth as dainty as a flower. She could not bear to rise.

Her black hair, tumbling over the pillow, had, where the light struck it, a blue iridescence; and this rich frame of hair about her oval face heightened the scarlet of the delicate and full lips, the rose of the cheeks, and the smooth brow's translucent pallor, while the drowsy eyes, by contrast with the blue-black hair, seemed a purer violet.

She rose. Seated on the edge of the bed, the tips of her slim feet on the floor, she yawned again daintily, stretching out her arms; and as she yawned she smiled. . . Then, remembering the hour, she hurried to the bath.

Despite the African heat of the September morning, her bath refreshed her. She ran back gaily to her room. Her colour was more delicately bril-

liant than before. Her eyes, from which all drowsiness had fled, resembled dew-drenched violets.

She combed her black hair, tossing its lustrous masses now to the left, now to the right, arranging it upon her head with long fingers deft as a musician's. Then she dressed in the garments that she had brushed and folded the night before.

Barbara put on her straw hat like a boy's, she glanced from the mirror to the clock. It was a quarter before seven; therefore she had forty-five minutes to breakfast and make her train. Going to the little bookcase, she stood before the rows of volumes.

Her very pure profile gave her a haughty air. The white blouse and the blue skirt moulded the long lines of her slim figure. Brown stockings and brown shoes set off the thin ankles and slender feet.

But what book should she choose? Her fingers touched Hans Andersen, lingered on Plato's "Apology," but she put "Hamlet" under her arm and ran down to the dining-room.

With a strange smile Miss Mary brought her a boiled egg. Barbara, however, sipping a glass of water, said:

"No, thanks. I only want some grapes."

"But this egg——"

"I don't like our boiled eggs!" said Barbara. "They have a funny smell."

"This won't have a funny smell," said Miss Mary. "This is a new-laid egg."

She opened it as she spoke; its yolk, a soft ball, fell into the cup.

"That's the way an egg should open!" Miss Mary thrust the cup under Barbara's nose. "Doesn't that smell good?"

Barbara, frowning in aversion, drew back her head; but the delicate odour of the new-laid egg caused her to smile.

"Oh," she said, "it's lovely, isn't it?"

And she ate the egg with a good appetite.

"It's a present for you," said Miss Mary, "from Jerome McWade."

"Well!"

"I met Jerome at prayer-meeting last night. He was asking after you, and I told him you worried me—you wouldn't eat your egg at breakfast. So he said he'd send you some eggs you would eat. Bill Stroud is going to bring you two new-laid eggs every morning from the chicken farm. The first two came just now."

Barbara rose. "It's kind of Jerome, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is. He's making money, too. He had on a new brown suit last night. He tried to find out where you were, but I never let on. Where were you?"

Since everything she told Miss Mary was repeated

promptly to the gossips at Brice's bakery, the young girl pretended not to have heard that question. " I'll miss my train," she murmured, taking up her book.

As Barbara hurried down Green Lane to the station her carriage was modest, and she glanced neither to right nor left. For if her eyes, shining with the soft and tender gaiety of youth, were ever permitted to wander, they were sure to encounter a man's eyes; and this man might be a millionaire in a motor-car, he might be a labourer digging in a ditch; but at any rate his eyes would look deep into hers in an appeal at once so humble and so daring that it would trouble her strangely. Her own eyes she would avert at once. Otherwise, inevitably, the man, nervous, embarrassed, would accost her.

She was alone in the world. Of her mother she had no memory. Her father, a musician, had played the oboe in the Philharmonic Orchestra for many years. Her father's salary had been fourteen dollars; work, moreover, was always steady with him; yet when he died he left behind, as is the way of these bohemians, no rich estate or landed property. All he left to Barbara was his temperament—the love of beautiful, honourable things, the hatred of ugliness and falsity.

Miss Mary Crocker, with whom he had boarded, kept Barbara on at school till she was fifteen, teaching her, at home, morality: the morality of Cinnaminson. Thus she taught the child that theft is

immoral because thieves go to jail. She taught her that unchastity is immoral because it results in nameless babes. She taught her, in a word, that immorality is immoral, hell fire being its punishment.

Barbara worked for Miss Mary after school, and on holidays she worked for her from six in the morning till eight at night. Thus she paid her way, and perhaps a little more.

At fifteen, through the influence of the Rev. George Harper, she secured a valuable post in Smollett's department store at a salary of two dollars and a half a week. Three years of faithful work caused this salary to be nearly doubled. Barbara, at the age of eighteen, got four dollars a week merely for selling enough neckties to give a profit of sixty dollars a week to her employer.

She administered that income well. She paid her board half in cash and half in labour—evening and Sunday labour—and the balance, two dollars, sufficed for car fare, for miscellaneous expenses, and for dress, even though dress at Smollett's must be distinctly smart.

Of course Barbara would never have gained the necktie counter had she not been pretty. All the girls were pretty at the men's counters. When a man shopped at Smollett's the prettiest girls surrounded him. They smiled up in his eyes, they held his hand in fitting a glove, to measure him for a

collar they actually put soft, light arms about his neck. . .

Barbara, as usual, had to stand on the crowded seven-thirty train. The train ride was hot, and hotter still the street-car ride, where again she had to stand, her young flesh pressed against the sweating flesh of men. But it was cool at the necktie counter, and she began her day's work cheerfully.

A benignant old banker was her first patron. As she gave him his change, he laid his withered, tremulous hand on hers and said:

"My child, I am a banker. My name is Van Pelt."

She drew her hand away. Mr. Van Pelt resumed:

"You look pale. You need the air. My carriage is at your disposal. To-night, for instance, if a drive——"

"No, thank you."

"Then, perhaps, some other time," said Mr. Van Pelt calmly.

He lifted his hat, and Barbara's kind heart would not let her refuse the hand that he extended frankly, like an old friend of her father's, in farewell.

Jerome S. McWade bought half a dozen neckties at two dollars apiece. In his new suit of "ox-blood brown" Jerome leaned almost completely across the counter in his desire to be near the beautiful girl. The abandon of his attitude embarrassed and

amused her. She thanked him for her eggs, and he praised his skill at chicken-farming warmly.

At last, with a regretful sigh, he erected himself from the low counter. He drew down his crumpled waistcoat.

"Well," he said, "will you take dinner with me to-night?"

"No, thank you. I am going to dine with Mr. Chew."

His face twisted into a wry smile, a smile suggestive of a sudden twinge of toothache.

"All right. Good-bye," he said; and he hurried away with his large paper bag of neckties.

The morning passed. At noon, seated in a lamplit subterranean rest-room, she ate without appetite her luncheon—two dried beef sandwiches and a specked banana. A girl on her right recounted a mean squabble:

"'Look out, my young lady,' she said, 'or I'll report you to the floor walker.'—'Well,' said I, 'there's Mr. Simpson now. Go and report away.'—So she brought Mr. Simpson over, and he said to me, 'Can't you wait on this lady, Miss Gibbs?'—'No, Mr. Simpson,' I said, 'I can't. Don't you see these ladies here I'm waiting on?'—'Why,' she burst out, 'she's not waiting on them at all. She's been talking beaux for the last ten minutes.'—'Oh, the barefaced story!' said I. 'Girls, did I mention beaux?'"

Then the conversation turned to dress, and Barbara opened her book. But reading was impossible: a hundred girls, in the hot and crowded room, chattered of clothes and men, clothes and men, too shrilly. At last, her half-hour over, she returned, listless, unrefreshed, to the necktie counter.

A fine spoiled the afternoon, a fine of twenty cents, due to a clerical error in her sales-book. The fine was just, nevertheless it angered her. She would be glad to forget it in the excitement of a dinner with Elisha Chew.

At the day's end two Cinnaminson girls accompanied her from the department store. She tried to escape them, but it was impossible. They smiled lewdly when she entered the hansom wherein Chew waited at the corner of Peanut Street.

Chew, in a suit of yellowish plaid, lounged in his seat, a gold-tipped cigarette in his brown hand. His brown shoes had, in lieu of laces, straps and buckles. His crossed knees showed his brown socks of openwork silk.

Barbara seated herself beside him with delight and awe. How handsome he was, how aristocratic, how rich! And the overworked young girl tried in vain to imagine the beauty of his life of idleness.

"The Westminster," he bade the driver.

Lounging in the carriage, he seemed superior to all the troubles of mankind; and his calm splendour

enchanted Barbara—enchanted, and at the same time tempted her—as, in the past, a fine oboe may have tempted her father to try his skill.

She talked artlessly, as the hansom hurried, of Jerome McWade. Jerome had been very kind, he was going to send her fresh eggs daily, he had spent twelve dollars on cravats.

And Chew's godlike serenity departed under her prattle. He shifted in his seat. He looked sulky. His voice became cold. Then Barbara, satisfied, praised his yellowish plaid suit, and his serenity returned.

They dined at six, in the roof-garden of the Westminster, twenty storeys above the heat-tormented city. There cool airs blew. Palms waved and flowers nodded. From arbours and trellises on every side came the cheery noise of rustling leaves.

And all was delightful till Chew's attack on the waiter. The waiter's remark about the heat was only prompted by politeness. How stupid then of Chew to snub him, to mistake his politeness for familiarity! And Barbara's heart ached with pity for the thin, pale waiter, accepting Chew's insolence with such fine humility, limping so hurriedly in Chew's service—poor frail little man—on his great, swollen feet.

As she descended from the hansom at the station, Chew suddenly invited her to spend the even-

ing at Island Park. She consented, resuming her place with a smile.

They drove to the pier, and were at once swallowed up in a whirlpool of young men and girls, five hundred interlocked young men and girls, shrieking, laughing, grunting. In the heart of this whirlpool they were swung very slowly down the landing-stage. There came a jam, they were lifted off their feet, and the pressure of flesh from all sides actually sustained them in mid-air. Then a very strong current seized them, it hurled them across a narrow gangway, it discharged them, dishevelled but calm, on to the steamer's deck. The crowd was not as bad to-night as usual, and Barbara laughed good-humouredly as she pinned up a rent in her blue skirt.

The steamer started. A cool wind blew steadily. The young men and girls, in groups of ten or twelve, sang hideous songs; or, withdrawn in couples, they sat motionless and silent, tightly folded in one another's arms, like wrestlers of equal strength.

Chew took Barbara's hand, but she withdrew it gently. She asked him a question concerning the horse show. Passion was at once driven from his heart, and he talked haughtily and contentedly till the ride's end about a blue ribbon.

In a damp, hot grove at Island Park they listened for an hour to the deafening uproar of a band seated, in a blaze of light, in an enormous pink

shell. Innumerable mosquitoes whined in their ears. Chew crushed mosquito after mosquito on his socks of open-work silk.

It was necessary to drink deep; managers, prowling amongst the tables, saw to that. Formidable men in black, they continually beckoned and whispered to the waiters, nodding towards such couples as dared to linger over their beer. Then the waiters would dart upon these couples, snatch up their glasses still half-filled, and ask sternly, reproachfully, what the next order was to be.

Chew and Barbara returned on one of the earlier boats. It was not crowded. They had the bow almost to themselves.

They said little, seated side by side. On their moist brows the cool, soft air was delicious after the stuffy grove. Overhead the sky was pale; a pale sky of faint stars, a hidden moon, and luminous, bluish-white clouds. Their shoulders touched. The bluish-white clouds, resembling mountains of foam, drifted from off the moon. The moon floated in a sky so pale and clear that all the stars were faded.

A deep bass music began to manifest itself in Chew's voice, and on that deep music Barbara's replies, delicate and sweet, fell like harp notes in a symphony. Then, silent, they gazed at one another in the moonlight. Each found the other's moonlit face beautiful with a beauty strangely serene. . .

Timidly, expecting a rebuff, he slipped his arm around her. She nestled to him with a sigh. He looked down in surprise. She was no longer smiling. She no longer thought of playing upon him. Now, for the first time, nature would play upon her.

Her upturned face was pale, the shadowy eyes were sad, the lips parted. And the world seemed to the young man to disappear. Nothing remained but a girl's beautiful face upturned in the moonlight. Pale, incredibly pale, that moonlit face; sad, sad beyond belief the shadowy eyes; and the imperious sweetness of the parted lips . . . the parted lips. . .

"Barbara!"

He glued his lips to hers. Shivering, she locked her arms about his neck. A moment, an hour. . . And lo, the boat had struck against the piles, already the excursionists were disembarking.

On the pier Barbara was taciturn and grave, her lids were lowered, she trembled, she seemed almost ill.

They entered a carriage, and silently, desperately, she flung herself again into his arms. The carriage hastened, and in the darkness, what with her closed eyes and her silence, he might have deemed her unconscious but for her lips' passionate response to his kisses.

He murmured soothing phrases to the lost girl, while at heart he exulted, "At last! At last!"

And he marvelled at her surrender, and he pitied and at the same time he despised her.

The carriage stopped. He had to rouse her almost roughly. She descended, leaning on his arm. "But this isn't the station," she protested, in a weak, querulous voice.

He opened the door of a huge house with boarded windows.

"Dearest," he said, "we'll stay here to-night."

She smiled a shocked and weary smile. "But—but—before we're married?"

Chew sprang back with a mean look of alarm. "Oh, no, you don't! I never mentioned marriage!" he cried.

She burst, to his astonishment, into wild sobs. She turned and, putting up her arm against the wall, she hid her face in it.

He looked down doubtfully, from the open door of his mother's empty town house, at that tall and slender figure in its attitude of despair. . . Was she shamming? . . . Women are tricky.

"Barbara!"

But she would not turn. Her face remained buried in her upraised arm. Her bowed back heaved. Her low sobs had a horrible sound, as though, to get out, they lacerated the flesh of her throat. No; she wasn't shamming.

He felt ashamed. But he drove away the thought of

shame as silly and false. He, a millionaire aristocrat, was treating this low shop-girl as it is right for millionaire aristocrats to treat low shop-girls. Still . . .

He hesitated, then took her hand. Her cold hand lying limp in his, she wept quietly.

"Barbara," he whispered.

She turned to him. "You said you loved me."

"Barbara, I do love——"

"No! If you loved me, you'd—you'd want to marry me. I can't understand it."

"I'll explain——"

"You can't love me and think me so beneath you!"

Her voice rose in anger. She jerked her hand from him. Chew, angered in his turn, said:

"Well, I never thought of marriage, and you know it!"

Again his words drew forth that lamentable wail, and again he felt ashamed. But he remembered his ancestry (he was descended from a milkman whose eighteenth century cow pasture now formed a pestiferous slum) and the memory of his ancestry strengthened him.

"She can't rope me in," he muttered.

And he turned on his heel and disappeared in the night: an overdressed figure swaggering hurriedly towards a club, swaggering hurriedly towards whiskey, tobacco, laughter, and the swift forgetfulness of an annoying failure.

V

BARBARA found, on reaching the station, that the last train was gone. She had no money. What was she to do?

Her eyes were swollen, and to hide them, pondering her plight, she stood before the closed Cinnaminson gate with bowed head. Though she no longer wept, a nervous shudder now and then seized her, her shoulders jerked, and she gasped. This mortified her exceedingly.

Pacing the station's marble corridor, she decided to walk home. It was a long walk, eight miles or more. But there was no alternative, and she set out resolutely.

And hour after hour, on her homeward way, she trudged a mean black avenue: an empty, silent avenue of mean black shops, mean black houses, rows of flickering gas-lamps—nothing but that, hour after hour, mile after mile.

"I must forget," she whispered.

Now and then, out of the darkness, a black figure lurched, and her heart stopped still in terror. But it would only be a drunkard, muttering his maudlin sorrows, seeing nothing as he staggered past.

A tall policeman on a corner halted her. He offered her whiskey from a flask; he tried to put his arm about her waist; he threatened to arrest her for street-walking. Frantic, she turned and fled.

In the neighbourhood of Diamond Square she got lost and wandered for an hour, crying with vexation and fatigue, before she found the silent, empty, lamp-lit avenue again.

The dawn overtook her at Perkiomen, and in the faint dawn light the landscape seemed as unreal as a dream. How strange, how cruel, that, while all the world slept, she must walk alone amid these vast blue silences of the dreaming dawn. . .

Life was cruel. She wished that she was dead. Ah, but some day she would be dead. Some day, somewhere, she, she herself, an old woman, would lie dying. Where would that be? And what would she be dying of? The thought was horrible. Yet every girl, since the world's beginning, had had that thought.

Life was cruel. Nevertheless she did not wish to die before her time. And tears, as she trudged on,

filled her eyes; she wiped them away with a tiny handkerchief which she took from her little pocket-book.

"Why, Miss Gwynne!"

She started, a wagon drew up, and Walter Johnson, the gossip's husband, looked down at her with a shocked smile. He was returning from market with a load of damaged vegetables and fruit.

"I missed the last train," said Barbara.

"But——"

"I had no money, you see."

"Well, get in here," said Johnson. "You must be dead."

"I'm almost dead," she confessed. But she climbed up to the high seat with nimble, boyish grace. She sat very erect on a horse-blanket smelling of horse, and, feeling Johnson's gaze upon her, she assumed a calm and stately air. "Thank you very much," she said, glancing at him nervously out of the corner of her eye.

"G'lang! G'lang there! What do I feed ye fur?"

Johnson, a florid man of forty-five, shot, as they jolted on, sly glances at her. But the pure, proud profile inspired him with respect.

"Have you been to Island Park lately?"

"Yes," said Barbara; "I was there last night."

He started. He looked at her again. The profile was incredibly grave and pure.

"Gay place, ain't it?"

"No; it's a stupid place," said she.

Thereafter they rode on in silence.

"I'll get out here," said Barbara at Green Lane.

"Can't I drive you to the door?"

"No, thank you."

He reined in his horse. "It's just as well not," he said, with a leer, "if you want to slip in quietly."

"I don't——"

But she stopped short, mortified to think that she had been about to undertake the task, at once shameful and futile, of defending her character against a man's slur. Very red, she mumbled a hurried word of thanks, and turned and sped up the hill.

Shame . . . she had wallowed in shame. . . And she shook herself, in the effort to escape her torturing memories, as one shakes oneself to drive off clouds of gnats.

"I must forget," she whispered passionately.

The door was unlocked, and she ascended on tiptoe to her little room. The little room, quiet and white and clean, had a serene air. The little room in its still serenity was beautiful. And yesterday she had been like it; but to-day she was stained and foul.

"It isn't my fault," she sobbed, as, in her night-

gown, she examined the rent in her skirt. "It was he, it was he!" And she bent over the skirt anxiously, while tears fell on the cloth.

The bed welcomed her, she nestled in its soft depths, and at once, so great was her fatigue, she seemed to glide down a smooth incline to sleep. Her eyes opened—opened the next moment, it appeared —yet she was perfectly refreshed, her clock marked three in the afternoon, she had slept nine hours!

She would lose a day's work, but that did not trouble her. Nothing troubled her. She felt so extraordinarily well. To feel like this was happiness.

And she smiled contemptuously at the thought of Elisha Chew, and, rising, she whistled as she made her toilet.

She had not loved Chew. She had only loved with a snobbish love his elegance and wealth, the greatest she had yet seen. But Chew himself she had always despised a little, for he was stupid, cruel. She recalled this stupid cruelty and that which he had inflicted on waiters, saleswomen, messengers, on all who served him.

She had seen his stupid cruelty, but through the golden mist of his wealth and elegance it had appeared unimportant. And she would have married him despite it, she would have believed that she loved him, had he not opened her eyes last night.

How he had opened her eyes! He had made his reason for refusing to marry her but too clear.

Stupid and cruel! If he had lied: if he had said, for example, that he could not marry her because his income would cease if he married against the wishes of his trustees, why, then, perhaps. . .

Barbara blushed. Remembering his kisses, she blushed more deeply. She pressed her hands to her burning cheeks. . .

Then she laughed. For last night did not matter, the past did not matter, nothing mattered. To-day she began afresh.

She descended to the kitchen, and, standing by the window, she ate two large pieces of cake, for she was very hungry, and drank a glass of milk. Then she sought Miss Mary.

Dressed for the evening, Miss Mary sat in the little parlour. On Barbara's entry she looked up from the *Cinnaminson Scimitar* with reproachful eyes.

"Well!"

The young girl spoke calmly from the doorway.

"I quarrelled with Elisha Chew, missed the last train, and had to walk home."

"But why did you walk?"

"Because I had no money to ride."

"Hm."

Miss Mary rose and handed her a telegram.

"They brought it this morning," she said. "I knocked at your door, but you were so sound asleep it seemed a shame to wake you."

Barbara knew the telegram could only come from Chew, and without breaking the seal she tore it into little pieces.

"I'm done with him!" she said, and her eyes glittered angrily, she compressed her lips.

"What has happened?" asked Miss Mary.

But the young girl, pretending not to hear, dropped the fragments of the telegram into a vase.

"I am going out now," she said, "for a long walk."

And as she descended Green Lane, she could have danced and sung, so light and clean and fresh did she feel from her deep sleep. The sky was blue, the air still and frosty, and the sunshine on wall and tree-trunk had a deep yellow note, an autumn note. Autumn, the season she loved best, was come again.

"Last night doesn't matter," she told herself. "The past doesn't matter. Nothing matters. I have begun afresh."

But the gossips of Cinnaminson, seated, a fat, grey, dingy circle, in Brice's bakery, started at sight of the radiant girl, and Annie Johnson rose and hastened forth to meet her.

"Hello, Barb." Tense with excitement, Annie

Johnson looked up eagerly in Barbara's face. "Do you feel all right this afternoon, Barb?"

There was evil in her question, and her evil eyes searched sharply the beautiful and honourable eyes of the young girl. Barbara, very much offended, said:

"Yes, thanks; I'm all right."

"You missed the train last night, didn't you?"

"Yes."

From the circle of gossips in the bakery three or four elderly women rose. Their withered faces smiled excitedly, like the faces of cruel children bent on mischief. Drawn close together, almost touching, these faces now peeped out at Barbara, filling the glass panel of the door. She turned and looked at them calmly, and they disappeared.

"There's no trouble between you and Elisha, I hope?" Annie Johnson pursued.

"I must be off," said Barbara. "I'm out for a long walk."

"But I want to know——"

The young girl, however, had escaped.

She had escaped, but her walk was spoiled. She crossed Green Lane Bridge, she sauntered down the River Road, and now she read her book, and now she gazed at the blue river winding between green fields. But her walk was spoiled. Very lonely, she hastened home.

"If they would let me be!" she sobbed in her room. "If they would only let me be!"

With letters and telegrams Chew bothered her for a fortnight. Once he accosted her in Peanut Street. Walking beside her, he pleaded to be forgiven. But she ignored him. Chew had opened her eyes, and she would never suffer again at his mean hands.

He disappeared mysteriously the next week. Strange looks, after his disappearance, were bent upon her, and under those strange looks she blushed, feeling as hideously abased as though indeed guilty of whatever thing it was they charged her with.

In the underground rest-room at Smollett's the uglier, older girls spoiled her daily half-hour with vile questions. "Didn't I tell you to look out for Chew?"

Then Mary Heron, the notorious Mary Heron, essayed to take her up. When Mary, for the first time that year, entered the rest-room, all conversation paused at her appearance.

She was pretty, very blonde, with brown eyes. Her gown was beautifully cut. She wore about her neck a string of small, pure pearls.

"Hello, Barbara," she said, with her roguish smile. "Give me a hard-boiled egg, will you?" She ignored the other girls.

"I'm sorry," said Barbara. "This is the only one I've got left. But I'll give you half if you like?"

"Oh, keep it," said Mary. Her beautiful teeth were like snow as she laughed, and she beckoned the juvenile attendant.

"Get some chocolates," she said, "and some soda-water and cakes and ice-cream at the lunch counter." She took out a two-dollar note. "What flavours do you like, Barbara?"

Barbara knew that all the girls in the room were regarding Mary and her; she knew that, if she accepted Mary's hospitality, the girls would believe her fallen to Mary's level. She must now choose quickly between wounding Mary Heron and preserving the respect of these suspicious girls. She made her choice without any hesitation.

"Vanilla soda-water," she said calmly, "and bisque ice-cream."

The boy departed, and Mary put her pretty feet on the table and looked, with her gay, rather malicious smile, about the lamp-lit subterranean room crowded with girls. The girls were neatly dressed, and they had the proud and glittering charm of youth; but, inasmuch as the rich George Smollett worked them so hard that no time was left for sunshine or fresh air, they were pale and sickly; and inasmuch as Smollett did not pay them enough

to allow of their proper nourishment, they were very thin.

These pale, thin, sickly girls, overworked and underfed, talked gaily, in the unwholesome basement's artificial light, of clothes and men, clothes and men. And here and there among them, easily to be distinguished, sat a ruined girl.

The ruined girl's boots were trim and costly, her frock was admirably cut; her eyes, furthermore, were bright and clear, her lips were red, her contours firm and vigorous. The soul of the ruined girl was damned, of course, for ever, but her body was in an incomparably better condition than the bony bodies of her saved sisters.

The boy returned with a luncheon deliciously sweet, and Mary gave him a quarter.

"I always lunch out," she said, "but my beau disappointed me to-day."

She sipped her white and foaming drink. "It's Jack Plummer," she explained. "Do you know him?"

"I met him once at the Westminster, I think."

"Yes; he is a friend of Elisha Chew, 3rd's. So is Maximilian Forrester, Jr. Do you know him, too?"

"I've met him."

Mary lowered her voice. "Plummer and I and Maximilian Forrester, Jr., are going to take dinner

at the Westminster to-night. Come with us, will you?"

"But," objected Barbara, "Forrester is married."

"He doesn't live with his wife."

"What difference does that make?"

Mary frowned. "I didn't think you were so particular any more."

"I'm as particular as I ever was," said Barbara.

"The more fool you."

Mary Heron rose. She counted her money, and then, unbuttoning her blouse, she thrust her purse down into the front of her corset. She seemed unconscious of the hundred eyes staring at her fresh young bosom, staring at her corset of pale, flowered satin. She calmly smoothed the delicate lace and knots of narrow ribbon that the purse had disarranged, and then, buttoning her blouse again, she gave Barbara a half-contemptuous, half-friendly nod as she lounged forth.

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VI

"Oh, I'm not going to faint," said Barbara hurriedly. She rose, but Henry Ford remonstrated from his horse:

"No; sit down again."

She sank back on the grass, she leaned her head against the rough bark of the oak, closing her eyes.

The October sky was blue. A cold, pure wind rustled the hilltop foliage. Down in the valley the forest swayed.

"What was the matter?" he asked. "I thought you'd fall."

"I felt so light," she answered, "as though I were afloat in the air."

"Have you been ill?"

"Oh, no; I'm never ill."

"But you're thin and pale." He paused. "You didn't use to be so thin and pale."

"Have you ever seen me before?" said Barbara carelessly.

"Yes," he replied, and he dismounted and walked beside her. His horse lingered, cropping the roadside grass. When he whistled, the beautiful animal hesitated, then moved forward, tossing its head, with an obedience reluctant and disdainful.

"Don't you love the autumn?" said the young girl.

"It is the best of the year."

"Why do the poets call the autumn sad? I am never so happy as on an autumn day."

She faced the joyous wind. With shining eyes she gazed down at the tumultuous forest. Her dress, blown backward, revealed the contours of her slender limbs, round arms, and small, girlish breasts.

"But you are ill. I'm a physician. Did you know that?"

"Yes, Dr. Ford."

"Well, I'm going to prescribe for you. You have no appetite."

"No," she said angrily. "I can't eat at all."

"Do you work somewhere?"

"Yes; at Smollett's."

"Then you must take a week off. You must set out every morning with your luncheon and a book —if you like books?"

"I love books."

"And you must tramp and read and bask in the sun all day."

"That would be pleasant," she said, frowning, "if one could leave one's thoughts behind."

"But you have no ugly thoughts!"

"You don't know—you don't know what——" Averting her face, she walked on hurriedly.

"You shouldn't grieve—you, of all persons!" He laughed, but his voice was kind. "Wait till you're an old woman to grieve."

Barbara's lip curled. "You don't know——" she began. Then, in silence, she stroked his horse's satin neck. But the horse, disturbed in some mild equine reverie, shook off her hand.

Below them the green world glittered in the sunshine. Here and there a maple, touched with the first frost, resembled a scarlet flame. Barbara liked this young man. She liked his blond hair. She liked his white teeth. Above all she liked his singularly intelligent and clear eyes.

"Now I must go," she said.

"As your physician," said he, "I'll come and see you, if you'll let me, Miss Gwynne."

"So you know my name, too!"

They shook hands. The young girl, strangely elated, hurried away. He stood and watched her, admiring the light and supple elegance of her walk.

Barbara, as he hoped, looked back at the last turn of the path, she waved her hand and disappeared.

VII

She sipped the Munich beer, black and velvety, that Dr. Ford had sent her, and, grimacing at its bitter taste, she turned reluctantly again to her underdone beef.

Miss Mary smiled. "Keep on," she said. "You look so much better. There are some little freckles on your nose."

"It is the wind."

"Isn't Dr. Ford a fine young man? If he, now——"

"Why doesn't he practise medicine?" Barbara asked.

"You know well enough he's a millionaire. That isn't why he doesn't practice, though. He's a student. Don't you remember that article in the *Cinnaminson Scimitar* about a germ he discovered? If he——"

But Barbara, with a laugh, was gone. In her trim blue suit she ascended Green Lane slowly. She got a book at the library, and, going down to

the Perkiomen, she spent the afternoon now seated on a bench in the sun, now slowly pacing the path beside the stream.

It was the middle of October, a windless, silent day. The afternoon sunshine was soft and glittering. Dead leaves fell through the crystal air; they lay on the water's surface in a scarlet and gold mosaic.

Barbara looked up from the beauty of her book, and the profound beauty of the day filled her with happiness. The stream at her feet, a pavement of scarlet and gold, curved down and away through slumbrous, glittering vales. Blue swirls of smoke rose from a hollow. The smell of smoke was in the air. In the distance, in a golden light, the little, bent figures of old men raked dead leaves into heaps.

She thrilled to the day's beauty. If life, she thought, were but like this always! And life would be like this but for the Elisha Chews and Annie Johnsons. She thought of Ford; she saw again his bright hair, his smile, his intelligent eyes. If Ford but sat beside her amid this beauty! And at the thought she thrilled again; she thrilled and thrilled, like a violin, to one long, exquisite note. . .

The sun sank, a luminous pink dust filled the vales, and Barbara rose. As she descended Green Lane, she was accosted by Annie Johnson.

"Are you feeling all right now, Barbara?"

"Yes, thank you."

"How's Miss Mary?"

"She's very well."

Suddenly Annie stiffened, and a look of malevolence made her horrible and formidable, like a spider or snake.

"What's been the matter with you, Barbara, that you've had to have the doctor?"

"It was only weakness—a weakness——"

"Oh, yes; of course. We know all about that. But what was, really, the matter?"

Pale, silent, with shocked, sorrowful eyes, Barbara regarded the woman. She opened her lips to speak; then, with a shrug, she hurried away.

"And no more making up to my husband, do you hear?" cried Annie Johnson.

Barbara hurried faster. She found Miss Mary in the kitchen, bending over the yellow batter of a cup-cake.

"I've just seen Annie Johnson," she panted. "It was—it was abominable. Have you heard anything —about me?"

Miss Mary began to cry. "It's all over the town," she wailed.

"What!"

"It's all over the town. It's as bad as that poor Mercer girl."

"Oh!"

Barbara turned and hastened forth again. She descended Green Lane with quick, resolute steps. Those wicked old women were now assembled, she knew, in Brice's bakery.

She flung open the door of the bakery, she advanced to the middle of the shop, she frowned down on the seated circle of fat, grey, dingy gossips.

"I want to tell you," she said, "that I am going to leave this town. It is you who drive me away—with your lies."

The gossips were frightened. Their withered mouths trembled. They exchanged quick glances of alarm.

"You killed Rose Mercer," she resumed. "I don't know whether what you said about her was true or not. At any rate, when she found out what you said, she drowned herself. Poor thing!"

Barbara paused. She looked down at those old women motionless in their seats. With their ugly, withered, upturned faces and their baggy necks they reminded her of toads. Her anger died suddenly. Shame and disgust succeeded it. Why had she come here?

As she retreated irresolutely towards the door, a voice said:

"Chew left her in the lurch."

There was a burst of hateful laughter, and her

anger flamed again. She turned, and meeting Annie Johnson's gaze, she strode to the woman's chair. Annie, fascinated by terror, looked up at the young girl; her mouth worked convulsively; her frightened eyes blinked.

"Why are you so wicked?" Barbara cried. "Why are you so cruel?"

Her voice caught, she gulped and hastened to the door, she was on the verge of tears.

At the doorway she stood with bowed head. They saw her shoulders jerk and heave. They knew that she was trying to compose herself before going out into the street.

"I told her how it would end," said Annie Johnson.

Barbara, without turning, without raising her bowed head, said sadly, in a voice broken by sobs:

"I am young and poor, but I try to do what is right. You killed Rose Mercer, you make me run away. Why? You wicked women—you wicked, cruel women—why——"

Her sobs overcame her, she rushed forth.

VIII

"I AM going to leave Cinnaminson," she said to Miss Mary. "I'll pack to-night and start to-morrow morning."

Miss Mary, still busy with her cup-cake batter, lamented:

"But if you leave they'll think it's true."

"Let them think it's true!"

"Barbara, you can't live on your salary."

"I can if I board at the Young Women's Christian Association."

"I hate to think of your going there. It's like the poorhouse. Oh, why isn't there a law to make these millionaires pay their hands enough to live on!"

Barbara ran upstairs and got out the little trunk of cowhide that had been her father's. There was room enough in it; her possessions were few; and she packed carefully her books, her pictures, her bust of Socrates, her immaculate and cheap linen, and her three little gowns. After dinner she set out,

pocket-book in hand, to pay Dr. Ford's bill. She told herself it was to pay his bill. . .

He lived on the Ridge. The Ford house and the Chew house were Cinnaminson's show places. But the former far surpassed the latter in grandeur.

Barbara, charming in her blue suit, entered an enormous gateway. Two great lamps surmounted the gateway; there was a lodge to the left; and before her a broad, pale drive curved away between rows of lights. The drive vanished behind black masses of shrubbery, and above the shrubbery shone the many illuminated windows of the mansion.

She ascended the curving path. On every side beds of flowers glowed faintly. She came upon a gravelled terrace, mounted a marble stair, and halted before a lofty door between marble pillars.

In response to her ring a tall youth in blue livery appeared. He held a silver plate in his hand, and his waistcoat was striped black and yellow. Behind him gleamed the rich colours, the subdued magnificence, of a very high and spacious hall.

"Will you tell Dr. Ford, please, that I'd like to see him?"

"Certainly, miss. What name shall I say?"

"Miss Gwynne."

With a respectful inclination he made way for her to enter, then swung to the great door with a skilful flourish. He led her across the tessellated

marble floor and set an armchair beside a fire of birch logs flaming in a marble chimney.

His coat-tails, adorned with brass buttons, flapped gracefully as he left her. Another tall youth in blue, a counterpart of himself, made a low, hissing sound from the stairway. He replied, there was a moment of restrained conversation, and the two servants separated and disappeared.

Barbara put her slim feet on the fender. The beauty of this spacious, lofty, splendid hall gladdened her heart. Eastern rugs, cream, old rose and blue, lay here and there upon the marble floor. In enormous jars yellow chrysanthemums drooped their long and shaggy locks. There were old black chests whose elaborate carvings seemed to writhe. There were great chairs of dark and lustrous wood, some upholstered in the pale, faded hues of old brocade, some in stamped leather with tarnished, half-obliterated gilding. Very wide and very shallow, the marble stairway swept upward in a stately curve. She lifted her head and saw the light, pure columns of a marble gallery running round the hall's three sides. A large tapestry had faded to a silver grey tone. And higher still were windows of stained glass dimly agleam.

Ford, in evening dress, appeared in the gallery. Leaning his elbows on the balustrade, he smiled down gaily at her. The sharp black and white of

his costume made his face look very ruddy and his hair very bright. Between thumb and forefinger he held a cigarette in a long tube of gold and amber.

"Hello!" he cried. "You're all right, I hope?"

"Yes," said Barbara. "I've come to pay my bill."

He laughed and hastened to her, but the passage of the marble gallery, the descent of the winding stair, the crossing of the great hall, seemed to take him a long time. She waited, happy and ashamed.

"So you have come to pay me, eh? But there was no hurry," said the young man.

He seated himself beside her, poked the fire, then leaned back and regarded her with his charming smile.

"You see," said Barbara, "I am going away."

"Going away? For good?"

She nodded. "I suppose I'll be lonely." She frowned at the fire. Then, "It's better to be lonely than to have friends!" she cried.

"Why?"

She glanced at him. His elbows on his knees, he bent forward, very blond in his black and white dress. The cigarette in its long tube emitted an endless blue thread of aromatic smoke. He gazed at the flame with a strange smile.

"Why?" he repeated.

A frown of deep thought puckered her brow, and she replied slowly:

"You try to be honourable and good; but your friends do vile things to you; and you feel as ashamed as though you had done vile things yourself."

"But those who do vile things to us are not our friends," said he.

"Well, we think they are till——" She gave an embarrassed laugh. "No, to be happy, you must have no friends—like a nun, you know—serene—— But I can't explain it. I suppose you think I'm silly?"

"No, I think you are intelligent."

"Nonsense!"

"It is true. Why are you going to leave Cinnaminson?"

"Those gossips," she stammered, "they have——"

"I see. You are leaving Cinnaminson on account of gossip."

Barbara flushed. "I am sorry," she said, in a low voice, "if you have heard anything."

"I? Heavens, no!"

"Nothing is true that they say." Her lip began to quiver; she bit it resolutely. Then, with a gulp, she resumed, "Nevertheless their lies make me unhappy."

"What have they said?"

"I hate to tell you."

"Why?"

"I don't know. Do you know Mr. Chew?"

"Yes, slightly."

"He took me about a lot in the summer. Now I have quarrelled with him, and he has gone away. They say my illness—they say—no, I can't tell you."

She gazed into the fire. Ford, blowing great clouds of smoke, regarded her with his strange smile.

"Dinner is served, sir."

A very old man in evening dress drew back a curtain upon a vista of faint splendours; then stood in an erect, stiff attitude, chin high in air, holding embroidered brown folds aside.

Ford, rising, put out his cigarette. "Look here, dine with me, won't you?"

"Dine now? It's nine o'clock," said Barbara.

"Lots of people dine at nine. Stay, do."

She hesitated. The shadow on the beautiful face, which was still only the face of a child, told him of the debate that went on in her heart. Suddenly she looked up, and in her troubled eyes he read the pathetic search that a maid's eyes make in a man's —the pathetic, timid search for sincerity, truth, fair play.

"Oh, you must stay."

He began to draw off her blue coat.

"Hat, too," he insisted.

Handing him her hat, she touched her blue-black hair before an oval mirror, and they entered a dining-room that was in shadow save for the white table,

upon which the many candles of two silver candelabra threw a flood of soft, clear light. The tall young footmen hastened to and fro silently. One of them drew out her chair, and she sat down with a confused impression of carved and gilded wood, of rich pictures in gold frames, and of black, luminous floor spaces as slippery as ice between pale Eastern rugs.

She felt very small and slim in her armchair. She buried her flushed face in a crystal bowl of red roses. She looked at Ford above the flowers with a smile.

There were tiny oysters before her, and since she had eaten at six nothing but a slice of toast, she enjoyed the oysters greatly. They gave her an appetite for the soup that followed, a soup so pale and transparent that she expected it to be insipid; but no, its flavour was at once delicate and powerful, as though a hundred meats and vegetables had been sacrificed that just their finest, subtlest juices might be given to that exquisite *consommé*.

"Where do you think you'll go?" said Ford.

"To the Young Women's Christian Association, if I can get in."

"Oh, you're not leaving Smollett's?"

"No; of course not."

"I'll miss you," he said. "But I can see you still?"

"Sometimes, perhaps, you'll want a new neck-

tie. . ." She hid her face in the roses, then looked up and laughed.

Three small red fish were set before him in a silver platter. They were surrounded by sections of orange in a red-brown sauce. The tart orange, the rich sauce, the delicate mullet itself—Barbara thought that she had never tasted anything so delicious.

"Why don't you go on the stage?" he asked. "You say you've always wanted to go on the stage. Well, now is your chance."

"My chance to starve!"

The aged butler bent respectfully over his chair; there was a murmured conversation about wine.

"The '90 *brut*," said the young man, and he turned again to Barbara.

"'Starve!' You wouldn't starve. The first manager who saw you would gobble you up. And besides your looks there is your talent. I'll never forget your reading of 'The Ugly Duckling.' It brought tears to my eyes."

"Nonsense. It was the beauty of the story that did that."

With a course of lamb, new peas and tiny new potatoes, her glass was filled with cold, clear wine. She had tasted champagne before, but never champagne like this.

"It is so pure," she said, "so pure."

"But tell me, why do you persist in this dog's

life? Don't you know that Smollett is robbing you of your youth? Don't you know that at twenty-five you'll be old, with thin, sallow cheeks, a sunken chest, wrinkles?"

"True," she admitted, in a low, troubled voice. "There's a girl in my aisle. She was so pretty two years ago. If you could see her now!"

"Give the life up."

"That's easier said than done."

"If I were a beautiful girl like you, I'd do anything to get out of it."

He regarded her thoughtfully.

"Anything," he repeated. "Anything. I'd sell my beauty to a rich old man."

"Would you?" she said coldly. Shocked, even disgusted, she frowned down at her plate, trying to collect her thoughts, which had fled like frightened birds.

"I certainly would." He felt a little ashamed, yet the conversation amused him.

Barbara spoke slowly. "Then, if you were poor, like me, I suppose you'd sell yourself to an old woman?"

In the flash of her contemptuous glance he laughed.

"No," he admitted. "I see your point. And I withdraw the rich old man. But there are always lots of rich young men about."

"Then would you, if you were poor," she per-

sisted, "sell yourself, in order not to have to work, to a rich woman, even if she were young?"

"No," he said, "no. It would seem too ignoble. And would it seem just as ignoble to you as it does to me?"

"Of course!" Her air was at once indignant and triumphant.

"Well, forgive me," he said. "I have been talking nonsense."

"I should think so!" And Barbara, with a little sigh of relief, dismissed the nonsense that he had been talking from her girlish mind.

The butler brought in a covered silver platter. Lifting the lid, he bowed and displayed, silently and impressively, a long-billed bird that lay on its back with drawn-up legs. Ford nodded, and the butler retired to carve the woodcock at the sideboard.

"Why are you smiling?" the young man asked.

"I don't know. Was I smiling?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Well, it seems odd, so much pomp, every day, for just one person."

"But I don't live like this," he said. "I live very simply at the Lester Institute. This is my mother's way of living."

Barbara tasted her rich and delicate breast of woodcock. Then she sipped her cold wine.

"What is it like at the Lester Institute?"

"Oh, there are a dozen of us there, under Barrows, trying to find cures for consumption, sleeping-sickness, tetanus and other diseases."

"Is the work interesting?"

"It is intensely interesting."

"Tell me about it."

"Well," he said, "we have recently discovered that almost every disease is due to a certain germ. Man is like a plant, and as this or that insect overruns a plant and destroys it, so this or that germ attacks and destroys man. We know a few of man's germs; we can kill them; and by killing them we cure the diseases they have caused. But of course there are hundreds of diseases that as yet we know nothing about. At the Lester Institute those diseases are studied. We try to find their germs, you know, and after we find the germs, then we find the means to kill them."

"But how? How do you go about it?"

"We experiment on animals."

"But how?"

"Among the millions of germs in existence, you choose one—the one, say, that you suspect causes malaria. You grow this germ, and it soon becomes a great colony. Then you inject it into a guinea pig's blood. If nothing happens to the guinea pig, you know that you have chosen the wrong germ, and you try another one on another guinea pig."

Barbara mused a moment.

"Sometimes," she said, "you find the right germ, eh?"

"Sometimes you find the right germ," he solemnly agreed, "and then you gain immortal fame, you save thousands of lives."

"You do like your work, don't you?"

"Like it? I love it. What would I be without it? Vice is so beautiful. . . But work like ours is such a joy, it promises such good to mankind. . . At the institute we are all glad to live like anchorites, so as to come to our work, every morning, at our very best."

A smoking *soufflée* was served hastily.

"And you," said the young man, "you'd make an actress. Then why don't you go on the stage?"

"But I don't know how to set about it. It isn't so easy as you think!"

"Take the bull by the horns. Go to New York. See all the managers. You'd be sure to get on."

She mused. "It frightens me, the thought of going to New York alone."

"Oh, it isn't as easy as remaining at Smollett's, losing your youth. But how exciting it would be! It would be life."

From the superb dessert he gave her a large peach.

"You have no idea," he resumed, "of the joy work is—work, I mean, not slavery—it is slavery at

Smollett's. Why, if you become an actress, you'll be so happy that your present life will seem to have been hell. Work . . . there's nothing like it."

The butler bent over him, and the young man said:

"Yes, we'll have our coffee out there by the fire."

They rose, the butler held back stiffly again the brown curtains, and crossing the spacious hall, they resumed their former seats beneath the high white chimney.

"I love this hall," said Barbara.

"My grandfather," he answered, "brought it from Italy."

A little table was set between them. On it a wax candle flamed beside a silver cigarette box. The butler returned with silver filters of coffee, and Barbara, smoking her first cigarette, watched the clear fluid drip slowly into the tall glasses.

"When do you leave Cinnaminson?" he asked.

"To-morrow. I've got to leave to-morrow."

"Got to? Why?"

She told him of her visit to the bakery.

"But it was stupid to go there!" he cried. "Don't you understand those women? In youth they were vicious. Now they are old, and their days of vice are over, but their minds run enviously on vice, vice, as a thirsty man's mind runs on water, and they suspect the young of doing all that they

would do so gladly if they but had the chance again."

Eleven o'clock sounded, and she rose hurriedly. He insisted on sending her home in a carriage, and a tiny brougham soon was heard without.

"Well, is it New York or not?" he asked, as he leaned in through the brougham's open door and took her hand.

Her voice came from the darkest corner. "What would you do?"

"New York, the stage!" he cried, relinquishing her hand.

"New York it is, then, since you're so anxious to get rid of me."

"But I come often to New York."

"Tell him to start, please. It's very late."

"But you'll write to me, won't you?"

"Why should I?"

"If you got hard up, you know, over there alone——"

"Tell him to start, please."

"But will you write?"

"You don't want me to."

"I do. Will you?"

She laughed again.

"Perhaps—if I get hard up——"

IX

Mrs. Woodford and Jerome S. McWade sat in the private office of the beauty parlour.

The beauty parlour, in its seven weeks of life, had prospered. The private office had been added to it, and an assistant with a complexion singularly pure had been engaged.

"I know fifteen dollars a week is generous," said Mrs. Woodford, "but I understood——"

"I'll raise you to eighteen the first of the year."

"But I understood, Jerome, that I was to be your partner!"

Through the peep-hole, in the silence that ensued, the assistant could be heard at work. The assistant was massaging the flabby and wrinkled face of Elisha Chew's mother. Beneath the delicate slap-slap sound of finger-tips on flesh, Mrs. Chew's voice rumbled earnestly, indicating the lines to be eradicated and the hollows to be filled, and recurring again and again to a kind of pouch beneath the chin that was to be taken entirely away.

The assistant agreed that all these facial renovations were feasible, but at regular intervals, in a high, pleasant, yet somewhat reproachful voice, she ventured the reminder, "But not in one treatment!"—*Not in one treatment:* the phrase had already become the beauty parlour's refrain. It sounded regularly, like a chorus, through all the daily slap-slap of massage and hiss of face-steamers.

Jerome S. McWade had assumed a stony look. He hoped that Mrs. Woodford would read in this look a kind superior's pain under an unmerited aspersion. She read in it, however, only the cunning of a money grubber. Yet, with a dry laugh, she submitted. She believed she could conquer, could compel him to make her his partner; but in an issue that she deemed ignoble she had no wish to fight.

"Oh, very well," she said. "Have it your own way, Jerome."

He was tremendously relieved. "You see," he explained, "you've got no capital. It would be difficult to arrange a fair partnership. I doubt, indeed, if it could legally be done."

He rose and tiptoed to the peep-hole. In the pink and white operating-room Mrs. Chew, a mass of fat, reclined in the attitude of a man being shaved. Bending over her, the assistant kneaded her face with vigour. Sometimes, under a kneading unusually severe, Mrs. Chew would cease her

rumble of talk and screw up her flabby countenance in pain. Then the assistant, recoiling two or three steps, would cry:

"There! You've brought back the very wrinkles I've been trying to work out! The face perfectly relaxed, please."

"Miss Maynard seems competent," said Jerome, returning to his chair.

Mrs. Woodford took from the table a bright instrument of nickel that resembled a coal-scuttle.

"Jerome," she said, "I am afraid we've made a mistake with this hair-drier, too."

"Won't it work, either?"

"No. The hand power idea was good in theory, but in practice it's no better than the water power."

"Let's see," he said.

The drier, which had been bought through a lying magazine advertisement, consisted of an alcohol lamp and a fan. The fan ran by hand. Mrs. Woodford lit the lamp, she held the wide mouth of the glittering contrivance to Jerome's face, she turned the handle of the fan with might and main. And he felt on his cheek, instead of the hot and powerful blast pictured in the lying magazine, only a faint, cool zephyr.

"Turn harder."

"I'm turning now," she panted, "as hard as ever I can."

He pushed the drier from him. "Throw it in the ash-barrel," he said bitterly.

"I suppose we'll have to get an expensive electric drier, after all."

"That is what I advocated from the first."

Mrs. Woodford did not contradict this lie, and with a pompous air he bent over the correspondence on his roll-top desk of yellow oak. She regarded him with a wistful smile, then she sighed. She wore a beautiful black gown of silk-cashmere; filmy and clinging, it gave her the figure of a robust girl. But the face above the gown had none of girlhood's fresh and delicate charm. The face was painted, the lips rouged, the carefully curled hair was harsh and wiry.

"I'm sorry I made you lose that twenty dollars, Jerome."

"It's all right. No fault of yours."

"I had faith in the *World Magazine*," she cried indignantly. "And for pay they help thieves to rob!"

"Oh, well," said Jerome, "the more fools we."

She returned to the work-room. The operator had finished Mrs. Chew's massage, and was now applying cosmetics delicately.

"You need an astringent," the operator said. "I recommend a large four-dollar bottle of our Fatimah. You apply it night and morning."

"An astringent?" murmured Mrs. Chew, and with a frown she sat erect. But the reflection in the mirror of her brilliant colouring, the rosy cheeks, the scarlet lips, caused her to smile. "An astringent?" she repeated, in a gentler voice.

"Yes; to tighten up the loose flesh."

And the assistant poked daintily, with her slim forefinger, the pouch beneath the other's chin. Mrs. Chew watched the pouch in the glass. Indubitably loose, it swung to and fro.

"You see?" said the assistant. "This must be tightened up."

"Well, send me a bottle."

Mrs. Chew paid, tipped the girl fifty cents, and waddled forth, lifting her skirts coquettishly above her thick ankles.

Jerome's face appeared at the peep-hole. "Do we need any supplies?"

"You had better get," said Mrs. Woodford, "some Miramar brunette powder. We sold four boxes yesterday."

The face at the peep-hole frowned. "We ought to make our own powder. It's nothing but scented chalk."

And Jerome, a busy day before him, sped like the wind out Peanut Street. He stopped at Smollett's to give the perfumery buyer two opera tickets, and the buyer bought fifty jars of Zenobia Cream. At

the drug trust, though he got no orders, Mr. Sampson accepted a half-dozen boxes of Zenobia Soap on Mrs. Sampson's behalf. And in Bloomingdale's, very carelessly, he mentioned that he desired the recipe of Miramar Powder in all three colours.

"I know the Miramar agent," said Bloomingdale's buyer. "I dined with him last week. I think he can be approached."

"Well, those three recipes," mused Jerome, "would be worth to me——"

The buyer nodded. "I'll see what I can do."

It was now noon, and, since he had breakfasted before seven, Jerome hastened with a splendid appetite to Wartog's Spa, his favourite lunching place: a haunt of business men.

The vestibule of the Spa had on the right a cage containing a beautiful cashier. On the left, before the marble and gold façade of an immense soda fountain, half-a-dozen business men sucked gravely, through straws, sweet, white, foaming drinks.

Beyond spread the Spa proper: nothing, at this hour, but a black stew of business men. The Spa reverberated, it belched forth powerful and unpleasant odours. But Jerome, pulling down his hat, plunged fearlessly in.

He fought his way through the outer press, he came to the heart of the Spa. There, perched on very high stools—"pegs" in the vernacular—a

hundred thin, pale, unshaven business men fed swiftly and alertly at long counters.

There were no vacant seats. Many ate standing. But Jerome preferred a peg, and after ten minutes he secured one. His lunch consisted of buckwheat cakes and mince pie, washed down with *café-au-lait*. The proprietor of the Spa, while he was eating, condescended to pause a moment beneath his lofty peg.

"Well, how's the boy?"

"Fine. And what a fine trade you've got here, Mr. Wartog!"

"Oh, so-so." Mr. Wartog, surveying his stew of business men, swelled with pride. "Oh, so-so."

"Why don't you enlarge the place?"

"Enlarge?" Wartog laughed scornfully. He waved his hand towards the business men who stood, in huddled, swaying masses, balancing full cups and plates. "The street railways tell you that the strap-hanger pays the dividends. Well, it's the same here."

"But," said Jerome, "if there's no accommodation, won't the trade go elsewhere?"

"Elsewhere the accommodation's the same."

"That's so."

Jerome tipped the waitress, slid down to earth, and stuck a toothpick in his mouth. Two business men nearly overset him in their struggle for his still warm peg. Leaping aside, he set out for the chicken farm.

As, toothpick in mouth, Jerome hastened up Pea-

nut Street, he thought tenderly of Barbara Gwynne. He had been away for five days, selling Zenobia Cream in Carbondale, Oil City and Millville, and not until this morning had he heard of Barbara's illness. Should he call at Miss Mary's on the way to the chicken farm? No.

And he glanced down at his boots, unpolished for three days. He slapped his sleeve, and from the unbrushed cloth a cloud of dust rose up. Passing his hand over cheek and chin, he heard the neglected beard's loud rustle.

No, he would not call on Barbara Gwynne. . . And the young girl's fresh beauty made him, for a moment, ashamed of his slovenliness. When, though, at Wartog's Spa or Silver Grill, had he ever seen a business man better shaved, better brushed, than himself? Business men, naturally, were far too busy for anything of that sort. And Jerome, a business man, strode on with all his confidence restored, supporting his slovenliness indifferently, almost proudly, like those Arthurian knights who forswore ablutions until the ending of their quest.

As he had assured Bill Stroud that he would not visit the chicken farm again that week, Jerome entered the garden cautiously. He tiptoed down the neglected path. Then, in order to take the negro completely by surprise, he burst like an explosion into the chicken house. But there was no one there.

He crossed the barnyard to Bill's little cottage. Bill made no answer to his ring, and he opened the door and entered. Though the October afternoon was mild and fine, the roaring stove shone like a sunset, the black iron changed to a translucent rose. The heat of the little room was intolerable; intolerable, too, the odour, the keen, sweetish odour, the odour of Bill. And above Bill slept. His snores, regular and calm, enraged Jerome.

An ear-splitting shout awoke the negro, and he descended from his chamber, stretching and yawning. At sight of Jerome he started, and his yawns ceased.

"This is a nice way to look after my chickens!"

"Well, Mr. Jerome, I——"

"No wonder the farm is losing money!"

"Mr. Jerome," said Bill, in a low voice, "I'm sick."

"Don't lie now. Don't make matters worse by lying."

"Who's a-lyin'?" shouted Bill. He glowered at his employer, then turned and stamped out of the cottage.

Jerome, after a moment's hesitation, followed.

"Hold on, Bill!" he called, in a conciliatory tone.

But Bill shook off the hand upon his shoulder.

"Sneakin' round here. . . Said he wouldn't come till next week. . . Can't stand this sneakin' round. . . It's time for me to quit."

"Here, Bill, have a cigarette."

"It's time to quit. . . Can't stand no more of it."

Jerome, striding along beside the negro, extended his cigarettes impatiently. He was, to tell the truth, fond of Bill. Bill would never get on. Bill was as unreliable as a babe, he could no more look out for himself than a babe, and Jerome, against his own better judgment, liked him and protected him.

"Cigarette?"

Bill, haughtily accepting at last a hard, cheap cigarette, followed Jerome into the chicken house. The incubators' thermometers indicated the right temperature, and in one incubator a few chicks had just been hatched.

"Poor little things," said Bill.

With closed eyes, their fine, pale down still wet, the chicks lay upon the eggs in broken attitudes; and it was strange how, as with overdriven machines, their violent heart-beats shook them visibly. Now they rose and tottered, blindly and feebly, over the uneven floor of eggs, and the next moment they fell, panting, utterly prostrated with the fatigue of that journey of five or six inches.

Jerome, coming on a hen surrounded by a dozen tiny chicks, paused and frowned.

"How about this, Bill?!"

"She was settin' and settin'. She set for days and days on nothin'. I'd throw her off the nest,

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and she'd fall like a rag and begin to set again right on the ground where she dropped."

"You took pity on her, eh?"

"Yes, sir; I took pity on her."

Puffing vigorously on their hard cigarettes, they gazed down at the hen. She had an air of absorption, content, happiness. She talked to her yellow chicks with a cluck almost musical, and, to teach them to peck, she kept taking up and dropping jerkily again the grains of millet scattered over the floor. Grouped about her beak, they imitated her quick, sharp movements; only they ate the millet, whilst she ate none of it. She, the mother, would never eat until their hunger was first satisfied.

There was a basket of eggs on the bench. They were dated, and the egg-dating stamp lay beside the basket. Jerome took up egg after egg, studying their dates silently. One was dated the eleventh of October, another the twelfth, a third the fourteenth, and more than a dozen bore the date of the fifteenth. Yet to-day was but the ninth.

"Be careful about this," said Jerome sternly. "Remember last year's tests."

At great personal inconvenience he had tested last year, upon his own palate, a hundred eggs that ranged in age from twenty-four hours up to three weeks. Having eaten the eggs soft-boiled—the strictest test—he was in a position to speak with authority. His

dictum was that a new-laid egg could conscientiously be dated ahead seven days, no more.

"Be careful about this," he repeated. "Don't go too far."

"Yes, sir," said Bill. "Trust me; I know my business."

"Nothing of this kind goes to Miss Barbara Gwynne, I hope."

"Miss Barbara Gwynne?"

"Don't tell me you've stopped taking her those new-laids!"

"But, Mr. Jerome, Miss Barbara Gwynne's run off!"

Jerome began to tremble.

"What the—what the devil——"

But he stopped short, ashamed of his grief-stricken voice, embarrassed by Bill's astonishment and pity.

"She's run off to New York. She's goin' on the stage, sir. Ain't you heard?"

"When did this happen?"

"Yesterday or the day before, Mr. Jerome."

"Do you know what the trouble was?"

"I only know what people say—Mrs. Annie Johnson and that lot. Of course I couldn't swear to nothin'."

Jerome regarded vacantly the egg which he held in his hand, an egg dated nine days ahead.

"What do they say?" he muttered.

"It seems that Chew feller got her in trouble and she ran off on account of the talk."

"Has there been much talk?"

"There's been so much talk that she went to Brice's bakery and told them women she'd kill 'em."

"But she denied the story, didn't she?"

Bill avoided the question.

"She said she'd kill 'em. Oh, she's got pluck." The negro laughed gently. "And, Mr. Jerome, she certainly is pretty. Ain't she pretty, though?"

Jerome laid the egg back in the basket.

"Well," he said, "it's a damned lie. She's not much more than a child. Why can't they leave her alone?"

"She certainly is pretty."

"It's a damned lie," Jerome repeated.

And he lifted his sad eyes and looked at Bill, hoping to find in Bill's face the assurance that he, too, believed firmly in the rectitude of the beautiful young girl. But Bill's face wore a strange smile: a charitable smile, but a very, very wise one: a smile that said, "I know all, I understand all, and I forgive all."

Jerome turned and left the chicken house. Bill, following a moment later, found him, in the barn, engaged on a vigorous examination of the huge bags of feed. "Go and get me your account book," he said.

That night, unable to sleep, he thought continually of Barbara. "Poor girl!" he muttered, tossing about the bed. "Poor girl!" How could anyone doubt her?

For to Jerome Barbara's physical beauty was not more real than the beauty of her soul. To say that Barbara had been wicked was, to him, as preposterous as to say that she had been ugly—that, on such and such a day, her round arms had been shrivelled, or her abundant black hair dull and thin.

But in the small hours he admitted the probable truth of the charge. Then, with a glow of deep and joyous emotion, he perceived that the charge's truth could not affect his love for the young girl. If it were true, then there had been unknown circumstances that prevented it from being vile. . . He recalled a novel about a false marriage ceremony.

But what a pity! And she had had to run away!

With a groan he rose. He lit the gas. He strode in his voluminous night-shirt to his desk.

The room was very cold, but for an hour the young man wrote. Unconscious of the icy draughts that swirled about his bare legs, he wrote Barbara a proposal of marriage, a letter ungrammatical and crude. But, through its sincerity, this letter was beautiful; a beautiful, humble letter that would move Barbara to tears.

X

JACOB ABERCROMBIE sat in his three-hundred-thousand-dollar office in the two-million-dollar Abercrombie Knickerbocker Theatre, and a multitude of young ladies, most of them quite nude, gazed at him and smiled.

They smiled, those naked girls, from walls and ceiling. They lolled in gracious attitudes upon soft clouds of a delicious blue. Their white, pure, lustrous flesh seemed moulded of cold cream, and, the work of Melcher Dana, the famous fifty-thousand-dollar painter, they had cost, according to the best critics, more than nine thousand dollars apiece.

Mr. Abercrombie was a little below the middle height. Clean-shaven, plump, slightly dried and withered by time, he dressed in black from head to foot; and in this black garb, with his bushy hair of iron-grey, his aquiline and hard profile and his clever eyes, he resembled a bad actor, an immoral clergyman, or the proprietor of a circus side-show.

Barbara Gwynne

He sat at a flamboyant Louis Quinze desk in a revolving Grand Rapids chair. His hands were folded upon his stomach, and his stomach, protruding a little, strained at his waistcoat and trousers. Sometimes, by sitting very erect, he eased that strain. Again he eased it by unfastening for a moment a button or two.

He awaited Barbara Gwynne. He had received yesterday Barbara's photograph, with a letter announcing her desire to become an actress, and, deeply impressed, he had postponed an important visit to Pittsburg in order to meet the beautiful young girl.

A boy brought in a card. Mr. Abercrombie nodded. Then, buttoning quickly the top button of his trousers and the bottom button of his waistcoat, he rose as Barbara entered.

Pale and grave, she entered timidly. Her violet eyes flashed in affright their radiant glances here and there. But her manner remained, her gentle and cold manner, her protection for three years against the boldest marauders of Smollett's necktie counter; and as she advanced with slow, light steps, Mr. Abercrombie, weighing her delicate beauty, her shrinking and distinguished carriage, the perfect neatness of her hair, of her gloves and of her shoes, decided that she must be the daughter of some aristocratic millionaire.

"How do you do, Miss Gwynne?"

He bowed over her slim hand and led her to a high-backed Jacobean chair. Then, returning to his own chair, he studied from head to foot the tall, supple figure, and he thought, "She is more beautiful than I expected. If she carries well—if she only carries well. . ." And he drew in his stomach, bent forward gallantly, and said, with a gallant and hard smile:

"And so you want to go on the stage?"

"Yes, please," said Barbara. She breathed stormily. She bit her red, full lip to stop its trembling.

With a mellow laugh Mr. Abercrombie rose and paced the room. Halting at the farthest corner, he fixed on her his shrewd, enthusiastic eyes. Her grace, as she sat erect in the straight-backed chair, seemed exquisite. Her beauty, at thirty feet, seemed finer than at three.

Yes, she carried well. The next question was, had she temperament?

"Have you got temperament, Miss Gwynne?"

"I don't quite know what you mean by temperament."

With mellow laughter, leaning against the mantel, he proceeded to define temperament and to show off.

Though some, he said, called it magnetism, tem-

perament was the true term. Bianca had it, Bianca the Italian, and when, in her great sleep-walking scene, women, though she spoke no word, fainted with horror, it was temperament that triumphed, temperament expressing itself in the slow and tragic gait, the fixed eyes, the . . . and here Mr. Abercrombie, to Barbara's embarrassment, actually crossed the room in a ghastly, paralytic manner which, she knew, must be his conception of Bianca's somnambulism.

"Temperament!"

"I see," said the young girl confusedly.

"What is Hardtbern but temperament?" he continued. "Take her love scene in 'Antare.' Her voice cooes, her walk undulates, her eyes are sad with love, her hands——"

What Barbara feared now came to pass. Mr. Abercrombie's hands were suddenly clasped in amorous agony, his face darkened in amorous longing, and he minced towards her with a movement of the hips evidently intended to be voluptuous.

"Temperament!" he cried again.

"I see," she repeated.

His hands held high above his head, he began to trip gaily about in a kind of dance.

"And our own little Flo Parsons," he cried, "our sprightly, elfin Flo—she, too, is but one piece of temperament."

Dancing to and fro, speaking in the high, crisp voice of Flo Parsons, he threw over his shoulder at Barbara quizzical Flo Parsons smiles.

"Dainty, elfin Flo!"

"I see," stammered the young girl, erect and gloomy in her chair. "I see."

Mr. Abercrombie returned to his seat. Panting a little, he unfastened two or three buttons. His slightly unpleasant sensation of fatigue and heat reminded him that he was wasting time.

"Why do you want to go on the stage, Miss Gwynne?"

"I've always longed to be an actress."

"Have you ever done anything?"

"I know a lot of poems. I've often recited."

"Suppose you let me hear something?"

She rose abruptly, and going to his desk, she leaned her elbow on the top; her clear eyes gazed far away while she sought some passage to recite.

"Oh, dear!" Suddenly she regarded him with knit brows. Her face twitched in distress. "I'm so nervous. I'm sure to do badly."

The troubled face and the eyes' appeal swept Mr. Abercrombie quite off his feet. Here, too, had he paused to weigh it, was a triumph of temperament. A pale face twitched, thin hands were wrung, frightened violet eyes looked into his: and lo, it seemed to him that all those barriers suddenly dis-

appeared which separate elderly men from beautiful young girls. It seemed to him that Barbara, as surely as with a caress of her fresh arms, drew him into the most perfect intimacy, showed him, as only mothers or sisters are shown, her girl's soul in undress. This vision raised powerful emotions in his breast: pure, tender, indescribably delicious emotions.

"Go on," he said. His voice, become deep and musical, vibrated. "Don't be afraid. I'll make allowances."

She assumed a charming pose, a virginal, constrained pose.

"'A Young Girl's Complaint on the Death of her Fawn.'"

And her voice broke sweetly and delicately into the crystalline music of Marvell's verses. Mr. Abercrombie listened first with indulgence, then with a lively interest. Here was a recitation that somehow, perhaps by its purity, perhaps by its deftness, reminded him of France. He clapped his hands at the end, but Barbara cried:

"I knew I'd fail!"

"It wasn't bad," said he.

"Oh, it was dreadful! I missed every line. There are little shades: I've worked them out. . . But I missed."

Mr. Abercrombie, cold and shrewd again, in-

sisted that the recitation had been good. Evidently, he said, she had studied: she had learned to recite poetry well. A waste of time. . . Still, the recitation showed that she possessed, hidden away somewhere, temperament. Temperament, now and then, peeped out. He paused, regarding her irritably.

"The question is," he said, "if I took you in hand for a year, would the result be worth my while?"

Barbara made no reply. He looked her up and down.

"Can you pay," he asked, "two hundred dollars a week to learn to act?"

She rose hurriedly, in her sudden confusion thinking him one of those swindlers who prey upon stage-struck girls.

"Oh, no," she stammered. She moved towards the door. "I am sorry to have wasted your time. I have no money."

"No money at all?"

"Seventeen dollars." Her hand grasped the knob.

"Wait a moment. Where are you from?"

Closing the door again, she turned to him doubtfully. "I am from Cinnaminson."

"Don't your people dislike the idea of the stage?"

"I have no people."

"You worked somewhere?"

"In Smollett's department store."

Her grave candour touched him. It was like questioning a child. He pushed her chair towards her again, and, as she seated herself, he resumed:

"How long have you been in New York, Miss Gwynne?"

"Three weeks."

"Do you find it expensive?"

"Not very. I have a little bedroom—what they call a 'hall room.' I cook over my gas-jet."

"What do your room and food cost you?"

"My room costs two dollars a week, and my food about twenty cents a day."

"Do you like that kind of life?"

"It is very lonely," Barbara confessed.

He mused a moment. He saw in fancy the tiny, bare, clean chamber. The young girl cooked her frugal meal. Then she ate alone. The solitude and the silence of this picture touched him.

"Tell me," he said, "how many agents have you seen?"

"Should I have seen agents? I didn't know. I tried to see nine managers, but it was useless. I tried to see you three times. Then I had my photograph taken, and I sent it to all the managers I

could find—eleven of them. Seven asked me to call."

Impressed by this confirmation of his belief in her beauty, Mr. Abercrombie said anxiously:

"How many have you called on?"

"You are the first."

He pushed out his lips and frowned. For a minute or more, lips pushed out, brows knit, he was silent. Then he slapped his desk and rose.

"Miss Gwynne," he said briskly, "I am going to put you on in the chorus of 'The Blonde Widow.' The salary will support you, and you'll learn, besides, the stage. Meanwhile I'll teach you to act."

Barbara found herself, somehow, standing before him. His hands upon her shoulders, he shook her gently, while he looked up into her face half in admiration, half in distrust.

"In a year," he said—and his voice was at once jovial and doubtful—"in a year, if you work hard, if you've got temperament, we'll make a star of you."

XI

MRS. WOODFORD was answering the morning's correspondence—thirty letters, elicited by a column advertisement, from old women who desired to become young and from ugly women who desired to become beautiful.

She sat at her desk in the private office, thoughtfully regarding the sheet of script in her hand. A black gown, very simple and expensive, accented the best lines of her superb figure. Her carefully curled hair was lighter than it had been in the past, and cosmetics made her face charming at a distance of seven or eight yards.

The young and pretty stenographer, whose distance was but one yard, stared at Mrs. Woodford with an air of mockery.

Mrs. Woodford began to dictate:

"DEAR MADAM,—It was most unfortunate that your son should lose part of his ear, but be thankful that it is nicely healed and that the injury was no worse. I feel quite sure that the loss can be re-

placed by an artificial piece, made of vulcanized rubber. Our new department of ornamental or plastic surgery is most efficient, and if you will call with your son by appointment, a free examination could be made and an estimate given for the artificial tip desired.—Faithfully yours."

In her natural voice she said:

"Mark that 'Hold for J. S. McW.'"

Then she dictated another letter:

"My dear Miss Harrison,—When the formation of the chin is such as you describe in your 'No. 2' drawing, there is no way to change it to a clear cut chin. We can, however, reduce it and make it firm for you by means of our rotary electrical massage. There are also exercises to give elasticity to the muscles and improve the flabby condition. The enclosed booklets specify terms and full information. Assuring you of careful personal attention when you call,—Sincerely yours."

She took up another letter, smiled slightly, and resumed:

"Dear Sir,—We have a number of creams for use after shaving that would answer the desired purpose, softening the skin and removing lines. The best treatment in your case, however, would be a full massage course. We have a gentlemen's department with private entrance and male or female operator as desired.—Faithfully yours."

The last letter ran:

"DEAR MISS WILKINS,—You are not the only one that mourns the loss of your charms, and while you should have begun long ago to build up the waste that was gradually going on in the system, yet by our patent physical culture exercises your figure will soon improve. The enlarged vertebræ at the back of the neck will disappear under the new rotary massage, and Zenobia Skin Food will fill up the hollows behind the ears. We recommend Zenobia Capsuloids to enlarge the bust. Zenobia Hair Tints are permanent and harmless, though best applied by our own specialists. Booklets of rates are enclosed. Get new teeth and you will be entirely transformed.—Yours sincerely."

Mrs. Woodford pondered three or four other letters, and the pretty stenographer gazed at her painted face with mockery and scorn. The pretty stenographer did not realize that she, too, was doomed to grow old; that she, too, might some day strive foolishly to recover her lost youth.

"That will do for this morning, Miss Churchill."

And Mrs. Woodford entered the spacious and gay beauty parlour. Its colouring was still pink and white, and in the vestibule Jerome's frog still yawned; but the parlour now comprised the whole floor.

There was a reception room, with magazines,

writing materials, cigarettes, and here the Zenobia preparations were sold—Zenobia Chin Straps, Zenobia Hair Tints, Zenobia Medicated Soap, Zenobia Powder in the three usual hues.

Passing through the empty reception room, Mrs. Woodford entered a large salon that pale curtains divided into eight or nine compartments. But the further end of the salon was free, and in this spacious recess a half-dozen manicurists conversed in low tones as they arranged on their white tables the rosewater bowls, the buffers, the orange sticks, the pastes, and the emery files of their craft.

Mrs. Woodford visited, one after another, the massage cabinets. In each cabinet a woman of fifty or so, expensively dressed, reclined with closed eyes whilst an operator passed over her withered face the electrically-driven instrument that was to make her young and fair again. These women, who were regular patients, Mrs. Woodford complimented on the improvement in their looks. Then she sought the ironing cabinet.

The ironing cabinet was full of steam. Through mists of steam it was difficult to see. She discerned, however, the robust operator. The operator's sleeves were rolled back from her strong arms, and, an iron gripped in both hands, she bent over a long table. On the table, through thick clouds, the prone figure of a very fat woman was visible, like a low range of snow

mountains. The iron glided over white hillocks of flesh. Steam swirled up furiously, groans were to be heard, the operator murmured soothing phrases.

"The abdomen?" said Mrs. Woodford, peering through the steam. "Ah, no; the hips."

"We worked off eight pounds last week," said the operator.

"Not from the hips!"

"Five from the hips, three from the abdomen," came faintly but complacently from the mound of flesh upon the table.

"Good!"

Mrs. Woodford approached the manicure room. "I am ready, Miss Atherton," she said.

Miss Atherton, a pretty girl, made a grimace that caused the manicurists to smile. Then she turned and followed Mrs. Woodford into a vacant cabinet.

Mrs. Woodford reclined in the operating chair, a hand mirror in her lap.

"We'll try the forehead lines again to-day, Miss Atherton."

Miss Atherton dipped her finger-tips in Zenobia Cream and applied the unguent to the other's face, rubbing it into the skin slowly and thoroughly. She fitted to the massage machine an instrument whose slightly convex surface, about one inch square, was composed of twenty or thirty rubber balls, smaller

than peas. She turned on the electric current, and the rubber balls began to revolve swiftly.

Back and forth, up and down, the instrument passed on Mrs. Woodford's forehead, and the flesh became pink and swollen. Mrs. Woodford looked at it in the hand mirror.

"The lines are fainter, aren't they?" she said.

"Oh, very much fainter," replied Miss Atherton, with the effusive insincerity of a beauty specialist.

She laid down the instrument, and, rubbing a little more cream upon the forehead, she massaged it with her finger-tips. After five minutes of this treatment the forehead was pinker than ever, and the lines were almost gone.

"It's amazing!" said Mrs. Woodford, as she gazed into the mirror.

A final massage was given to the entire face, and then Miss Atherton applied powder and rouge deftly. Mrs. Woodford, rising, went to the window in order to see more clearly the result.

"I think it's wonderful," she said.

The joy in her voice made Miss Atherton suddenly feel very sorry for her.

"Isn't it wonderful? You look lovely!" the young girl cried.

"How you talk!" said Mrs. Woodford, laughing with delight.

She found Jerome in the office at his desk.

"What about this?" he demanded, extending the letter which proposed an artificial ear.

"Jerome," she said, "I am more and more convinced that we must take up ornamental surgery."

"It isn't safe," said he.

"But if we get good surgeons——"

"That's the point. I asked Ford about it. Good surgeons wouldn't work for us."

Crumpling the letter, he dropped it into the waste-paper basket.

"Give that idea up," he ended.

"Well, just as you say."

Jerome, with a frown, re-lighted his cigar. He hesitated, glancing at her uneasily, as though he had something difficult and unpleasant to reveal. Then he shrugged, he seemed to change his mind, and, clapping on his hat, he hurried out to luncheon.

A year of success had altered him a little. He no longer chewed tobacco. His dress was more startling in hue and cut; by Peanut Street standards, that is to say, he was better dressed. Religiously, too, every other day, he now visited a barber's to be shaved. And often he was seen at a street corner, seated high above the throng on a kind of throne, smoking and reading a newspaper while a bootblack polished his boots.

The May morning was divine; but Jerome had not yet outgrown Wartog's Spa, and from the

sweet air, from the mild, glittering sunshine, he passed without a shudder into the eating-house.

He leapt upon a still warm peg, and, calm amid the stench and uproar, he devoured baked beans and apple-pie. Many of the pale, lean, unshaven business men at Wartog's had become his friends. They conversed with him dreamily as they bolted indigestible food, their thoughts far away upon "deals" and "dickers."

"How's business?" their conversations all began.

The beauty parlour, on his return, was full. The seven manicurists at their little tables plied the long buffers busily. In the compartments hair curlers clicked, face steamers hissed, and massage machines hummed. Low groans came from the ironing cabinet, and ever and anon the voice of an operator cried reproachfully, "Not in one treatment!"

Mrs. Chew arrived at three. She was led into the private office. The Rev. George Harper followed her.

"George wants to see Mr. McWade," Mrs. Chew explained.

"I'm sorry," said Mrs. Woodford, "but Mr. McWade has just gone to Cinnaminson. I don't expect him back to-day."

"George wants him to use his influence with the newspapers." Mrs. Chew turned to the divine. "Tell her what you want, George."

"I will do so. Sister Woodford, your heavy advertising gives Brother McWade a vast influence over the local press. Well, I desire him to use this influence in my behalf. A sacrilegious and filthy play, 'Magdalen,' is to be presented at the Peanut Street Theatre next week, and I am getting up a protest. A committee, headed by myself, purposes to call on the mayor, the stellar actress, and the impresario, and I desire a very full and complete report in the public prints. Now, if the suggestion to the press should come from dear Brother McWade instead of me——"

Mr. Harper smoothed his black beard and looked at Mrs. Woodford wistfully.

"I'm sure Mr. McWade will help you," she said. "But 'Magdalen' isn't such a bad play, is it?"

"Sewage."

"Have you read it?"

"No."

"Well, I'm sure Jerome will help you. I'll tell him to-night."

"I thank you."

Mr. Harper rose and shook hands gravely with both women. Mrs. Chew said:

"Take the carriage, George. Then send it back for me."

And she retired for the afternoon to a rose and white cabinet. She undressed, an operator coated

her from head to foot with Zenobia Cream, then massaged her vigorously for half an hour. A manicurist, after she was dressed again, devoted another half-hour to her nails. A hairdresser spent ninety minutes in washing, drying and curling her hair. Then Mrs. Woodford in person gave her facial massage. Her weekly bill at the beauty parlour was never less than forty dollars.

"You do look better," said Mrs. Woodford, as, at the end of the massage, she darkened Mrs. Chew's thin eyebrows with a charcoal pencil.

"Everybody tells me so!"

"Well, it's the truth."

"But I must look my best to-night. I'm entertaining the Ebenezer Whistling League. I suppose you know I've turned Methodist?"

"Yes."

"It's made a lot of talk among my friends." Mrs. Chew pushed out her lead-coloured lips to the rouge stick. "I'm old enough, however, to do as I please."

"That's right," said Mrs. Woodford warmly. "Life is so short. Let us enjoy it despite our friends' jeers. Our friends! They're only friendly when we're wretched. The minute they see us happy they turn jealous."

She washed her hands. Mrs. Chew, regarding enviously her supple and robust figure, said:

"You are looking well."

"Yes, I feel well."

"It's the treatments, isn't it?"

"Yes; it's the massage and exercise and diet. It makes me think, I feel so well, of the Fountain of Youth. Here, right here, I sometimes think, is the Fountain of Youth that poor old Ponce de Leon sought in Florida."

"You've had a great success here."

"A wonderful success."

The thought of her success exhilarated Mrs. Woodford, and it occurred to her, as she returned to the office, that she had not felt so happy, so young, since the distant days of Harvey Woodford's courtship.

Jerome S. McWade, just back from Cinnaminson, brooded at his desk of yellow oak. On her entrance he scanned her critically. His bright eyes lingered on her face. With a thrill of pleasure she thought that he, too, marvelled at the look of youth and freshness that had returned to her.

"Mrs. Woodford," he said, "there is one little matter I want to speak to you about."

"Yes?"

"You see,"—his air was nervous—"our success depends on convincing people that we make them young again—so I think it would be better if Miss Churchill managed the parlour hereafter. You—you will devote yourself to—to executive work in the inner office."

He looked at her with an awkward and obstinate smile. Her over-red lips, he noted, were twitching. They twitched as though unseen threads jerked them this way and that. An odd spectacle.

A spectacle that meant she took it rather hard. He had known, of course, that she would take it rather hard. And he had had to nerve himself. Again and again he had said, "Now, suppose I, being a barber, went bald in a shop that made a speciality of scalp treatments: wouldn't I expect, then, to be fired?" And knowing just what he would suffer in such a case as that, he thought he knew just what Mrs. Woodford would suffer. Only she would suffer less in her case: for she was not being fired: she was only being thrust into the background.

"You want me," she said, "to keep out of sight?"

Her voice was proud. Her air, too, as she stood before him, was proud, despite the twitching of her lips. But this air of pride did not harden him against her. It softened, on the contrary, his heart. For in it he dimly perceived the pluck, the fine, forlorn, hopeless pluck, the pluck of a woman. It is the way a woman takes these things.

"You want me to keep out of sight?"

"Well, yes."

XII

In New York Barbara, for the first time, lived.

She spent her mornings in study before a three-leaved mirror in her room. The afternoons she gave to Mr. Abercrombie's lessons, or to hansom rides, followed by tea, now with Millicent Mortimer Miller, now with Agnes Atwood. And in the evening, in a skirt reaching nearly to her knees, she displayed her beauty in the ninety-thousand-dollar production of "The Blonde Widow."

Her boarding-house, in an old-fashioned square down town, was more than comfortable, more than respectable. It had been chosen for her by Mr. Abercrombie himself; his secretary, too, lived there; Barbara suspected that Miss Hanch, under orders, spied on her. . . Not that it mattered.

Barbara's work with Mr. Abercrombie was difficult and delightful. He was writing a play for her, "Vassa," and the scenario was already finished, but whether the play should be termed a one-hundred

or a two-hundred-thousand-dollar production had not yet been decided.

All winter she rehearsed the first act. There were winter afternoons so warm that business men walked in their shirtsleeves to business, and she rehearsed beside an open window.

Vassa was a beggar girl, a beggar girl in a mediæval town.

"She is Carmen," said Mr. Abercrombie, "with all the wickedness left out."

And turning off the steam heat, he described the carnival scene of the first act. Mediæval houses, grey and picturesque, rose to an extraordinary height, and from every storey girls would throw confetti on the glittering, whirling throng below. The whole stage, Mr. Abercrombie said, would glitter and whirl. Changing lights would fall on cloth of gold, on pierrots in black and white, on knights in armour, and on supple dancers. But with her gaiety and beauty Vassa would dominate all, even to the dance of masked revellers culminating in the young king's entrance. And the act would end, naturally, with a scene between Vassa and the king wherein the beggar girl would be so irresistible that Dagobert IX., with respectful ardour, would offer her his hand in marriage.

The winter pursued its strange course. A day like June would be followed by a blizzard, and

Barbara Gwynne

Barbara amid six-foot drifts would plod to the Abercrombie Knickerbocker Theatre to learn to play the beggar girl.

For a week, as a beggar girl, she climbed a high wall to give a knight a rose. The wall was a massive bookcase, which Mr. Abercrombie ascended with her. A hundred times, despite his bulk, Mr. Abercrombie leapt from shelf to shelf to show her how a wall is climbed in a graceful, hoydenish and laughing manner.

March ushered in the spring. The sky was a raw blue, the harsh sunshine hurt, and at every corner whirlpools of dried filth revolved continually in an abominable wind. Dust was everywhere; it inflamed the eyes, gritted between the teeth, withered the skin. And day and night, like the grey phantoms of indefatigable dervishes, the whirlpools of dried filth revolved.

Barbara in March began to work on the second act of "Vassa." Vassa was now a Queen. And as, in the first act, she had been the most hoydenish of beggar girls, so, in the second, she was the most superb of queens. Her languid walk, her sweet and supercilious voice; her uplifted chin and cold, proud gaze delighted Mr. Abercrombie.

But should Vassa be pure or impure? Which would the public prefer? While Mr. Abercrombie pondered this question, Hardtbern and dainty Flo

Parsons had a great success as heroines of considerable impurity. That decided Mr. Abercrombie, and in the second act he introduced a lover.

For the love scene he taught Barbara to be voluptuous, to pant, to walk with slow, dragging feet, and to protrude the abdomen slightly. The act ended with the king's discovery of the guilty pair, a sword fight, the death of Vassa's lover in her bedchamber, and the repentant queen's withdrawal to a cloister.

But if the second act had been impure, the third was in its purity whiter than a snowdrift.

"White, all white!" cried Mr. Abercrombie.

And Vassa, a white-robed nun, counted her beads and fed her doves among the nuns in the convent garden. A short act, relying for its effect upon its purity. But it concluded with a crash of arms. The country was at war, the royal forces were in peril, and in their harness of grey steel the marshals and generals, gathering in the convent, besought Vassa to lead the troops that would set out that night to save the king.

"Do you see?" cried Mr. Abercrombie. "In act four you'll wear chain mail. You'll be a Joan of Arc. You'll absolve your sins by conquering the enemy."

"But Vassa," Barbara objected, "knows nothing about warfare."

Barbara Gwynne

"What did Joan of Arc know about warfare?" Mr. Abercrombie snarled.

Barbara grasped and executed Mr. Abercrombie's suggestions with an accuracy that caused him, she believed, to overpraise her. For her work was only imitation. Thus, as the queen voluptuary, she imitated Hardtbern; as the queen warrior she imitated Flo Parsons; as the beggar girl she imitated Voe. And she perceived that "Vassa," too, was only imitation—the tawdriest act from this success patched awkwardly to the tawdriest act from that.

Nevertheless, humble and painstaking, she worked hard. To learn merely to imitate often seemed beyond her powers. And lo, after an infinity of blind, perplexed gropings, after an infinity of failures, she saw Vassa, like a doll in her hands, begin to breathe, begin to move and speak and laugh with a real life of her own. Vassa, though still a composite of imitations, was yet—O happy miracle—somehow alive.

Barbara worked hard, and on Sunday afternoons, under the wing of Millicent Mortimer Miller and Agnes Atwood, she met at teas and receptions the critics, playwrights and novelists of New York.

Critics, playwrights, novelists—she liked them because they were sincere. They really believed that they were great, they really believed that they made New York, like Paris, a centre and a hotbed of the arts, they really believed that the world's eye

was on them; and to the beautiful and modest girl they boasted so naïvely that she was always sorry when the time came to return with Millicent Mortimer Miller and Agnes Atwood to the boarding-house.

Millicent Mortimer Miller and Agnes Atwood worked on the *Dispatch*. Day after day, between them, they filled the *Dispatch's* "woman's page." While the average "woman's page" contained articles about superb waste-paper baskets made of old bowler hats, the *Dispatch's* was wholly devoted to sexual topics. Millicent Mortimer Miller, for example, would pretend that a matron had sent her a letter: "I was unfaithful to my marriage vows nine years ago, and conscience now urges me to confess all to my husband. What do you advise?" Under the pretence that in her dilemma this matron must be helped, Millicent Mortimer Miller would write two or three columns about the dreariness of marital fidelity, the power and delight of passion, and the difficulty that a middle-aged woman must always experience in resisting the advances of a handsome youth. She would cite examples and give details—Mrs. A's defeat by young B, young D's repulse by Mrs. C—and beneath the thin veil of her hypocritical sermonizing there writhed and glowed an eroticism almost maniacal.

But Agnes Atwood reminded Barbara of the Cinnaminson gossips. She was, in fact, a typical village

gossip, speaking, in all the village gossip's coarseness and ignorance, to a million persons instead of to one. If a drunken reprobate of fifty chanced to carry off a little girl of nine or ten, Agnes Atwood put her foul nose on the scent. She interviewed the reprobate in his cell. She interviewed the little girl on her mother's knee. She gloated, she raged, and incredible in their crude frankness were the revelations that she spread before the horrified and eager readers of the *Dispatch's* "woman's page."

"Vassa" neared its end. The company began to be engaged. Millicent and Agnes inserted many paragraphs about the new play in the *Dispatch,* and Mr. Abercrombie sent them tickets for "The Blonde Widow" and gave them remunerative work to do. The critics also got remunerative work from Mr. Abercrombie, and in their tremendous supplements Barbara's photograph as Vassa appeared again and again.

Thus she became a personage. The best shops insisted upon selling her the smartest gowns on credit. And in her box at the matinée, in her hansom in Fifth Avenue, Barbara, very elegantly dressed, floated in a delicious bath of flattering glances.

So her days passed—the morning before the mirror in her room, the afternoon with Mr. Abercrombie or at matinée or tea, and the evening in the chorus of "The Blonde Widow."

Barbara Gwynne

"The Blonde Widow" was a great success. Its chorus was the most beautiful that New York had ever seen. Barbara herself felt a strange delight as she dressed in the large dressing-room amid the beauty of that band of girls. . . They drove to the theatre in hansoms, and, always late, they disrobed hurriedly, piling in disordered mounds sables and ermine, Paris gowns, and hats of a strange grace. Their costly lingerie, tossed through the air, fell very slowly, like down, upon the floor in soft, light heaps. On their stockings of gossamer silk gleamed garters whose jewelled clasps contained tiny powderpuffs, watches, miniatures. . . And if their apparel was exquisite, they themselves, thanks to the extraordinary and laudable perfection of their toilet, they themselves, as they dressed or undressed, as they drew on their little shoes, fastened their stays, stepped out of foamy petticoats, were more exquisite than their apparel. Their white teeth and their pink nails possessed a glancing, gemlike polish. Their slender limbs and bodies had a marble firmness. And when, straight and supple, they ran across the dressing-room, their young flesh, with the light flowing over it, looked translucent, luminous. . . They came to the theatre hurriedly in hansoms, departing hurriedly, with elderly millionaires, in little broughams.

But Barbara always departed alone.

XIII

SHE departed alone until the night Jerome S. McWade took her out to supper.

Jerome occupied a stage box that night. There, despite his high opinion of himself, the audience's critical stare oppressed him. Under it he sat motionless, in a wooden and constrained attitude, his white-gloved hands laid awkwardly on his knees.

In his lapel was a mauve orchid, and at the end of the second act an usher, bearing high in air a great basket of mauve orchids, ran gracefully down the aisle.

"Miss Gwynne!"

From the chorus Barbara in her short skirt came forward to receive the flowers. There was a rattle of applause. Bowing and smiling, she saw Jerome's card pinned to a long mauve ribbon, and she glanced at him coquettishly. But he did not meet her glance. He sat with downcast eyes, alone in the huge, dark box, clapping gloomily.

"He doesn't like my short skirt," she thought;

and this thought amused and at the same time pained her.

She found him, at the end of the performance, waiting at the stage door. He stood bareheaded under an electric light. His cape-coat was thrown open, revealing all the elegance of his shirt-bosom, wherein a diamond glittered. In one hand he held a gold-knobbed stick, and in the other his closed opera hat.

"Why, Jerome, how grand you are!"

He opened the opera hat with a boom, set it hurriedly on his head, and, as he clasped her slim fingers, the gold-knobbed stick fell clattering on the sidewalk.

A victoria, with two horses and a resplendent coachman, bore them smoothly through the mild April night to the restaurant. Barbara, enjoying the ride, knew that for Jerome this was a night apart, though how supremely it was a night apart she had no means of knowing. How could she know, for example, that in her honour his dress, from top to toe, was quite new, like a bridegroom's?

They descended at Delmonico's. Jerome nervously opened and closed his opera hat with sharp reports. The *maître d'hôtel* led them to a little table covered with orchids.

"More orchids!" the young girl cried.

He made no reply. The restaurant, like the box, oppressed him. During the first part of the supper he drank rather than ate. This wise course soon put him at his ease.

"How is Cinnaminson, Jerome?"

"The same as usual. I suppose you've heard about Dr. Harper?"

"No. What about him?"

"His sermons are the hit of the year."

"Are they good sermons?"

"Yes; very good and very sensational. He is preaching this month a series on the white slave traffic that the newspapers are giving columns and columns to. It is rumoured that he has had a call to a fashionable Peanut Street charge."

"And you are succeeding too, aren't you?"

He drank off a glass of hock, leaned back, and looked arrogantly at the men and women seated at the hundred little tables of the supper-room.

"I bet there's more than one chap here I could buy out."

"Are you as successful as all that?"

"Nothing to what I will be. I suppose you know I've bought the livery stable and turned it into a cream factory?"

"Zenobia Cream?"

"Yes; of course."

And eating and drinking heartily, he described

the chain of beauty parlours wherewith he would soon link New York to San Francisco. With the quail champagne was served, and, to be ready for the champagne, he finished hurriedly a glass of *Château Mouton Rothschild.*

"I think you've overdone the wine," said Barbara.

"Oh, no."

For he had read in a Sunday newspaper that in all properly served meals a different wine went with each course. Six wines, accordingly, accompanied their supper. His face was flushed by the time the coffee came on. Lighting a very long and black cigar, he swallowed a *liqueur* thirstily.

"What a big cigar!" said the young girl.

"It's a dollar article."

"Dear me, you must be getting on, Jerome!"

"Well, Barbara"—his red face smiled indulgently amid blue smoke wreaths—"well, Barbara, I've got fifty girls in the factory, three salesmen on the road, and four new parlours ready for opening."

"You've built your mother a house, too, haven't you?"

"Yes, a little gem."

"Some day you'll be a millionaire."

"If I can secure a couple of the franchises I've got my eye on, I'll be a multi-millionaire."

"How happy you'll be then, eh?"

But he shook his head.

"No," he said. "No, I never expect to be happy."

"Why, you look happy now, Jerome!"

"I am happy now."

She blushed, her eyes fell, and, twirling the stem of her glass, she said in a soft, constrained and gentle voice:

"Any one so kind deserves to be happy."

XIV

"So in the autumn you'll be a leading lady!"

Ford rose, took up his hat and stick, and held out his hand.

"How funny you look in that rig," said Barbara.

He had worn in Cinnaminson country clothes—brown shoes, flannel collars, soft, rough lounge-suits in dull greens or greys—but in New York his dress was rich and lustrous. The black morning coat buttoned tight, and in the dark trousers the pattern could hardly be discerned. The silk hat glittered; the boots with their tops of grey cloth glittered; and even to his bright hair, brushed smoothly back, a glitter had somehow been imparted.

"Don't you like the rig?" he asked.

"I don't know," said she. She thought him elegant, but was not his elegance too quiet? She recalled Elisha Chew's garb, which, like the plumage of a splendid bird, caught the eye at once. "Some

young men," she said, "get all their clothes in London."

"What if I got all my clothes in London?"

He extended his hand again, but Barbara, still ignoring it, rose and went restlessly to the open window. The street, grey and old, was gilded with sunshine, and the maples rustled their new foliage softly. The air upon her flesh was a delicious caress; the magic of the spring filled her with a joy as keen as pain. She said fretfully:

"Oh, where are you going in such a hurry? What a divine afternoon! And I must stay in my room and work!"

"Come with me." Then he hesitated. "No; I'm afraid it would bore you."

"I don't think it would bore me."

She turned to him with a smile, and her eyes rested in his, her tender, virginal eyes, which seemed at once to offer and to beseech happiness. Her beauty flashed and glowed, it cast a spell over the young man, and with a sigh he approached her. But her eyes fell, she blushed, and turning to the window again, she repeated, in a mechanical and breathless voice:

"It wouldn't—bore me."

He thought his air had frightened, even offended her; and to reassure the young girl he assumed a matter-of-fact tone.

"Then get your hat," he said. "I'm going out to our new laboratory."

In half an hour they were in the country.

Their carriage advanced slowly, clouds of dust swirling up behind it, along a white road between green hedges. The sun was bright and hot, but cool airs were astir. On every side fresh meadows sloped, and the fruit trees were changed to enormous pink and white bouquets. With gentle and delicate grace the snowy fruit trees swayed against a sky of dazzling blue.

"Why didn't you write to me?" he said.

"Well, you see," said Barbara, "I never ran out of money."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"Don't you remember the reason you asked me to write? You feared I'd need help, you know."

She laughed, but he persisted:

"Why didn't you write?"

"Because."

"Because what?"

"Because," she said, in a low voice, "you didn't want me to."

"Because I didn't want you to!"

"You didn't want me to," she repeated.

"If you only knew!"

"But you didn't, did you?"

His air changed suddenly. He blurted, in a harassed and angry tone:

"No, I didn't. You have your work; I have mine. Why, then, disturb each other? To work calmly—that is the only happiness. After you went away I thought of you all the time. I was wretched. I did nothing. And now again, this meeting. . ."

"You are sorry we met again!"

He looked at her. She was dressed in white. Even the little shoe thrust out nervously from beneath her skirt was white, and on the slender instep he saw the glimmer of white silk hose. Her delicate, proud profile was troubled under the huge hat wreathed with violets, and through the lace-like broideries of the blouse the pure flesh of her bosom, stormily heaving, gleamed.

He took her hand, but she withdrew it. He took it again, and it remained, soft and warm, in his.

From the swaying fruit trees white blossoms fell through the clear air. They lay on her lap, on his coat; they clung like snowflakes to the old horse's coarse mane.

"How happy I am," he said. His voice was sincere and humble. "How happy it makes me to be with you, Barbara."

She turned to him with soft laughter.

"I, too, am happy," she said.

But the carriage entered a white gateway, and two young men in white hurried forth from a long, low building that resembled a very clean factory.

"Here we are."

They descended. Other men in white appeared. There were handshakings and introductions, and they went in to tea.

"Do you see our goldfish?" said Ford, as he led Barbara past the fishpond. "Our goldfish are full of trypanosomes."

"Trypanosomes?"

"The microbes that cause sleeping sickness. Sheldon is at work on sleeping sickness."

At tea the young men, having changed their white dress, argued. They argued about books, about religion, about marriage, about the ideas of a Japanese bacteriologist who had visited them that morning.

Ford turned to Barbara. "Old Harper," he said, "is getting up a campaign against us."

"What kind of a campaign?"

"An anti-vivisection campaign. We are supposed to roast live rabbits—very gradually—for amusement. Our oven is cold at first. We increase the heat a degree or two every five minutes."

The young men laughed. Barbara liked their air very much. For these young men were not absorbed, as were George Smollett and Jerome S.

McWade, in getting rich quickly by means of legal cheats and thefts. No: they were absorbed in really worthy things: they were absorbed in the effort to make longer and happier the life of man.

And Barbara, before the air of the young scientists, saw for the first time how despicable was the air of the Smolletts and McWades, the air of the business man. The scientists seemed to her by contrast frank and noble. The business man, beneath his jauntiness and flippancy, seemed cunning and contemptible, deluded and mean.

Ford, after tea, led her over the building.

"How nice it is here," she said, impressed by the shining cleanliness of the long white suites, the spacious rooms of white enamel, flooded with clear light, where men in snowy linen worked with glittering instruments at tables of glass. "What is the work like?"

"Do you know what serum therapy is?"

"Of course not."

He led her to a window, he nodded towards a sunny field where a dozen horses were grazing among daisies in the shadow of white fruit trees.

"Those horses," he said, "are living pharmacies. They have got in their blood the power to withstand certain diseases. Suppose a child takes, for example, diphtheria. We draw then from a horse

some diphtheria-proof blood, and this blood we inject into the ailing child. It recovers. Otherwise it would have died. That is serum therapy."

"Strange! But what makes the horse's blood diphtheria-proof?" she asked.

"I'll show you."

He took from a porcelain incubator a three-necked glass jar which contained an amber-coloured fluid covered with a greenish crust.

"The diphtheria germ," he said, "is alive, like you or me. It lodges in a child's throat and multiplies, and the child sickens as a plant sickens under plant lice. We secure some of the diphtheria germs from the throat of a diphtheritic child, and we raise them in bouillon as a dog fancier raises dogs in a kennel. This fluid is a bouillon, and this hideous green crust is composed of untold myriads of diphtheria germs."

The young girl shuddered.

"And the filtered mixture of germs and bouillon, a mixture called a toxin, is what gives the horse his disease-proof, his antitoxic quality."

"But how?"

"Come to the stable."

She followed him, interested, horrified. She liked his grave enthusiasm. But would anyone be so stupid as to attack him if his work really did good? With a puzzled frown she said:

"Is it much better to treat diphtheria by serum therapy than by drugs?"

"When diphtheria was treated by drugs," he answered, "it was a deadly ailment. Now that we treat it by serum therapy it is, if taken promptly in hand, as harmless as a cold."

They entered a white-tiled stable. A horse turned upon them its mild eyes.

"My little sister," he said, "died of diphtheria. I was very young, but I still remember faintly my mother's tears as she described the atrocious suffering of the poor little girl. . . Such suffering is almost banished, such tears are almost banished, thanks to these patient horses."

They halted at a white box-stall where two young men were at work. The young men were in white from head to foot; even their faces were masked in white cloths.

"This is a new horse," said Ford. "They are testing him to make sure he is perfectly healthy."

"And after that what will they do with him?"

"When a fortnight's tests have assured them of his health, they'll inject into his veins a cubic centimetre, half a thimbleful, of the toxin you have seen. That will make him very ill. For three days he'll eat nothing, he'll have a fever, his bones will ache. Then he will recover.

"A week later he will get another injection of

toxin, three cubic centimetres this time, a thimbleful and a half. This injection, thrice the size of the first one, will have on him no more than a third of the first's effect.

"Another week, and he will get an injection of twenty cubic centimetres that he will hardly feel. In short, he will take, before long, an injection of five hundred cubic centimetres of toxin, more than a pint, more than enough to kill a drove of horses; and this injection will have no effect on him whatever. None whatever. For his blood, you see, is now antitoxic. It has developed, somehow, the power to conquer the deadly germ of diphtheria."

They sauntered out again into the field, where the horses grazed under the white fruit trees.

"Are they all antitoxic?" Barbara, in an awed voice, asked.

"Yes. Each of them takes into his veins five hundred cubic centimetres of toxin every ten days. That keeps his antitoxic power at the proper pitch. And every month he is bled. Every month he gives us eight quarts of blood, eight quarts of diphtheria cure."

"Poor horses!" said Barbara. She went from one to another. They let her stroke their scarred necks. "Poor, poor horses!"

XV

"Oh, if I were only back at Smollett's again!"

"Nonsense!" said Jerome.

They were driving to the Abercrombie Knickerbocker Theatre—to the first night of "Vassa."

"I seem to be wound up too tight—do you know what I mean? As if something would snap."

Through the darkness he saw vaguely the pale profile. Her eyes, looking straight before her, had a sombre glow. Her mouth worked, her fingers drummed on the glass, she crossed and uncrossed her knees, rocked back and forth. Jerome, touching her shoulder, was shocked at the violent trembling that, like a torrent, coursed through her flesh.

"Brace up, Barbara."

"I can't keep still."

"Brace up."

But she turned away; her slim figure writhed in fright.

"Oh, if I forget my lines! I have so many to say, and now I can't remember one. My brain is in a whirl. What do I say on entering? What do I say to the King? I can't remember!"

Like a brother he laid his huge, strong hand on her arm.

"I'm ashamed of you. This is childishness. You're sure to succeed; you know it. Why, Barbara, do you suppose a business man like Jake Abercrombie would have sunk a quarter of a million in 'Vassa' if he——"

She laughed nervously. "Has it risen to a quarter of a million now?"

"Brace up."

"I will!" Barbara frowned, and, clenching her fists, she sat erect and stiff. "I will! Every one is like this on a first night. You must have pluck, that's all."

"Oh, you'll succeed. Jake is a business man."

"Jerome," she said gratefully, "I'd never have got through this terrible last week without you."

A week ago, when he had dined with her, his perfect confidence had fortified her strangely; and, on her saying that she wished she had his confidence to lean on always, he had volunteered to remain in New York until the production of "Vassa."

The carriage halted at the stage door, and Barbara, pale and resolute, descended.

"You'll see me in my box," said he.

"Will there be any one besides Dr. Ford with you?"

"Ford won't be there. He wired he couldn't come."

"Oh!"

She frowned, hesitated, then hurried away. Her sad face grieved him. He saw it as he entered the crowded lobby, as he followed the usher to his place, as he sat and waited for the rising of the curtain—a pale, troubled face, the eyes tragic, the mouth disappointed, bitter. . .

And then, to a burst of gay music, she ran laughing on to the stage, a lovely beggar girl with a rose in her mouth. In heavy, blue-black masses fell her hair, and poverty had torn her gold-coloured gown, so that long slashes, opening with her movements, revealed for an instant gleams of flesh, the beauty of a supple limb, the snow of a curving shoulder.

She dominated at once the crowded scene. The audience stirred and rustled. Glasses were levelled hurriedly.

"What a beautiful girl!" "A dream!" Such were the whisperings heard by Jerome.

Vassa, with the lightest, swiftest grace, climbed a high wall to give a knight a rose. The knight would have embraced her, but she made a perilous

leap, was caught in the arms of two soldiers, and stood laughing, breathless.

The audience gasped; then, enchanted by her daring, her gaiety, her beauty, it broke into applause. Applause, for more than a minute, stopped the play.

Jerome regarded with awe the young girl in her slashed golden gown. She stood with head slightly lowered; her smile was demure; and the limelight, like moonlight, made her remote, pure and fine, lifting her high above the common run of humanity, changing her from a girl to a nymph, a goddess.

And he sighed, perceiving the hopelessness of his dream. . .

The act progressed, the carnival scene being specially applauded — the twenty-thousand-dollar carnival scene wherein, without a spoken word, a multitude of "supers" capered awkwardly for ten minutes under changing lights.

"There's stage management for you!" Donald Dhu, the critic, whispered to Jerome. "A twenty-thousand-dollar stage picture."

"Twenty thousand dollars!"

But the dialogue between Vassa and the King fell flat. This dialogue Mr. Abercrombie believed he had written in a vein of delicate and subtle poetry. Nevertheless it brought the curtain down upon a cold house.

"Too literary for them," sighed the critic. He took Jerome's arm. "We'll have a beer, eh?"

They crossed the street, entered a brilliant saloon, and fought their way to the bar.

"Two beers," said Donald Dhu.

The bartender took two glasses in his wet and sodden hand, filled them with beer, and levelled off the foam with a paper-knife.

"'Vassa' is bound to succeed," said Jerome dubiously.

"Oh, yes."

"They didn't clap very much."

"This is a Broadway production."

"Oh, I see."

But Donald Dhu, noting his puzzled frown, explained:

"A Broadway audience is the most difficult one in the world. A Broadway production—but did you never hear that term before, Mr. McWade?"

"What term?"

"'A Broadway production.' That term means the top notch. Talk about your French endowed theatres! Why, the first act of a Broadway production like 'Vassa' costs more money than six endowed plays."

"You don't say so!"

Jerome bent towards two young men who were discussing Barbara. He heard them praise her

grace and her talent. Delighted, he laid his hand on the critic's shoulder.

"You must have a bottle of champagne," he said. "Isn't Barbara Gwynne splendid?"

Donald Dhu drank off his beer and, protruding his lower lip, sucked the froth noisily from his black moustache.

"Gwynne isn't bad. But of course she'd be nothing without Jake."

Jerome had great respect for Donald Dhu, having been told that the critic's salary was eight thousand dollars a year. Nevertheless he said:

"Don't fool yourself about Miss Gwynne. She's worth twenty Jake Abercrombies."

"So you say!"

A bell tinkled, and finishing their champagne, they hurried to their seats as the curtain rose upon the second act.

The second act succeeded. The royal Vassa, young and proud and voluptuous, pleased the audience, and when the King slew her lover in her bedchamber, under her own guilty eyes, the curtain fell to enthusiastic applause, and there were seven curtain calls.

A boy in the *entr'acte* went hurriedly among the critics with typewritten slips describing the furniture of Vassa's bedchamber. It was all Louis Quinze. The bed, an historic piece, belonging to

Madame de Pompadour, had cost nine thousand dollars.

In the lobby Jerome encountered Dr. Ford.

"I have just dropped in for a minute," the physician explained.

"Isn't it great?" said Jerome. "A real Broadway production, eh?"

But Dr. Ford, with a contemptuous laugh, placed his hand on his white waistcoat.

"Great? It makes me sick," he said.

"Do you mean that?"

"Of course I mean it. When the King harangued the lovers I thought I'd have to rush out."

"But Barbara is good?"

"Barbara is wonderful. She has the stage temperament, the purest, richest vein of it I've ever seen. Vassa needn't speak, she needn't move, she might be naked—but her eyes would tell you she was a real queen."

"That," cried Jerome, "is what I said to Donald Dhu; but Dhu says she would be nothing without Abercrombie."

Dr. Ford put a fresh cigarette in his long amber tube. "Donald Dhu? Who is he?"

"The *Dispatch's* critic. He gets eight thousand a year."

Tinkling bells called them to their seats, but Ford declared that he could stay no longer, that

Sheldon awaited him at the institute with some remarkable trypanosome slides. Jerome, however, at the end of the third act, saw him still lounging in the lobby. Then Mr. Abercrombie approached.

"Come on back, McWade. She wants to see you."

In her dressing-room Barbara, in her beautiful silver armour, leaned against the chimney-piece. She held her visor in her hand. And by contrast with her mailed figure, which symbolised death, her young face, symbolising life and joy, seemed strangely fair.

"Didn't I say you'd succeed?" cried Jerome.

She advanced to meet him with long boyish strides. "But it's not over yet."

"Yes, it is," said Mr. Abercrombie. "I've caught them again. My seventh success in succession." He pushed back the thick grey curls from his brow and turned to go. "But we'll have to cut the end of the first act," he said from the doorway. "It's over their heads."

Jerome took Barbara's hand. "Is your nervousness gone now?"

"I hope so."

"When did it go?"

"It is astonishing," she cried joyously. "I don't remember dressing. Mrs. Harrigan was afraid I'd get hysterics. Then, after I was dressed, I looked

up my first speech—my speech to the knight—and I kept repeating it over and over. Of all my speeches it was the only one I knew."

"You must have been frightened!"

"I should say I was frightened, Jerome. Why, I don't even remember my first entrance."

"And you looked as happy!"

"Happy! Oh, I shudder to think of it. My legs seemed made of lead as I climbed that wall."

"You went up like a cat!"

"I kept telling myself that I'd forgotten all my part; that I'd ruin the play. And then—when I made my flying leap, you know, and when I heard that blessed, blessed applause—I seemed to awake from a horrid nightmare. Suddenly I could do my best, as though I were at home alone. Yes, I could do better than at home alone: the audience keyed me up."

Flushed, joyous, she regarded Jerome . . . and her beautiful, clear eyes clouded.

"You didn't see Dr. Ford?"

"Yes, he's in the lobby now."

"Send him to me."

But Ford had left the lobby; he could be found nowhere. At last he had obeyed, no doubt, his trypanosomes' persistent call.

"Vassa's" conclusion, the pageant of victory, was a triumph. The grey stone hall of the castle

was hung with white flowers. The young queen, slim and grave, sat on a high gold throne. Beneath her minstrels sang to great harps, mail-clad nobles caroused, nautch girls danced, and continually the thronged scene's stir and glitter was drenched in changing floods of pink light, blue light, green light, yellow light.

The curtain descended in a tumult of cheers. It rose again, and Barbara stood in the centre of the stage alone. Three ushers ran forward, extending huge baskets of orchids. From Jerome's box sailed a great bouquet; it fell at her feet softly. Then from all the boxes bouquets pelted her, the applause rose to a bellow, and Barbara, very happy amid her flowers, kissed her hands, she bowed and smiled, and the curtain rose and fell a dozen times.

XVI

ELEVEN o'clock, a divine May morning, and the Rev. George Harper, in dressing-gown and slippers, still dawdled over his breakfast.

The red dressing-gown was of flowered flannel, and the red velvet slippers, the handiwork of Mrs. Chew, were embroidered with yellow roses.

As he sipped his weak coffee, as he nibbled his cold bacon, the Rev. George Harper asked himself in pleased amaze what it was that gave him such a holiday feeling. He remembered with a smile. It was the spring.

He wandered, after breakfast, over the house. He nosed in the dark cellar amongst the contents of the larder. He conversed blandly with the "hired girl" as she scrubbed the kitchen floor. Then, while his wife made their bed, he described, lounging in an armchair by the open window, the larder's sour odour and the greasy look of the cooking utensils—proof that the hired girl needed

another reprimand. But his wife accepted this proof drily.

Dinner, steak and potatoes, was at one. Of course, since he had breakfasted at eleven, he had no appetite for dinner. He ate, however, half a hot cherry-pie brought in to him by Annie Johnson. He still wore the red dressing-gown and the red slippers.

After a nap in the study, he began, at three, the composition of two sermons. He finished the sermons at four. Then, throwing himself on the couch again, he read "The Opening of a Chestnut Burr" till supper time.

Mr. Harper was growing. He now got his name occasionally in the press, and when, a momentous question arising, he notified a dozen papers that he had an important interview to give out, one or two of the papers would sometimes send a reporter to him.

Mr. Harper hoped soon to outgrow Ebenezer. Meanwhile he did all he could to make Ebenezer attractive. Thus a holiday sermon would be illustrated with tableaux, and every five minutes he would pause in his argument, the curtain behind him would be drawn, and in the silence a young girl in a white robe, her eyes closed, her stiffly crimped hair unbound, would be seen on her knees embracing an enormous cross. At the right mo-

ment on Easter Sunday doves were let loose. He had a crowded house when he befouled, in a discourse entitled "Sewage," the beauty of a work of art.

His supper was spoiled by a note, strangely cold, from Mrs. Chew. She said:

"GEORGE,—At your request a detective agency has sent me an estimate of $300 for gathering further evidence against the vivisectors, but as I am rather short just now, I think you had better abandon this expensive project for the present.—C. C."

Mr. Harper trembled.

"Short!" he cried. "It's Ross Dagar's fault if she's short. I'll see Brother McWade about this."

.

In the sitting-room of his apartment at the Hotel Washington, Jerome S. McWade rose to welcome the divine.

"Doctor, I'm glad to see you."

"I thank you, Brother McWade."

"Sit down and have a cigar."

They drew their chairs close to the radiator, which emitted a faint smell of paint and iron. It was a bitter night, and, taxed to its utmost, the radiator clanked and gurgled. Mr. Harper slapped its hot surface with his icy hands.

"Brr! This warmth is grateful."

"There's nothing like steam heat."

They smoked a while in silence. Then——

"I'm afraid I can't go on with that vivisection business," said Jerome.

Mr. Harper sighed. "I have called, brother, on a more painful errand."

"How so?"

Erect on the edge of his chair, holding his cigar between thumb and forefinger at arm's length, Mr. Harper said:

"Dear Brother McWade, can you, before Heaven, affirm that your several beauty parlours make for righteous and meek living?"

"Of course I can!"

Mr. Harper laid his cigar on the radiator.

"Yet, through your agency, Mrs. Silas Pettit has been swindled out of a hundred and thirty dollars."

"It's a lie!"

"Bear with me." Mr. Harper flushed. His hand, clasping his beard, shook. "Bear with me," he resumed. "It is a painful topic. But, brother, your Peanut Street beauty parlour has planted a spirit of vanity in Mrs. Pettit, and a young man, by preying on this spirit, has robbed our dear sister of her savings."

"What are you talking about?"

"Listen. Sister Pettit is no longer young. But, thanks to you, her hair is a bright brown, and her painted face has at a distance the look of a girl's. A scoundrel, the son of Doctor Dagar——"

"Do you mean Tank Dagar?"

"Yes, Ross Dagar. Ross, in the autumn, made her acquaintance. He pretended to be in love with her. She is fifty-one; he is twenty-four; but, if she believed in her rejuvenation, why shouldn't she believe in his love? They met secretly. They wined and dined. I hope and pray they went no further."

"Young Tank Dagar!" Jerome's cigar, held in the corner of his mouth, slanted up towards his eye, which was closed to keep out the smoke. "Young Tank Dagar!"

"I pray they went no further. But, on their last excursion, Sister Pettit had her savings with her. For there had been, I believe, some talk of an elopement. The young man got possession of her purse, and, on taking leave, he forgot to return it. She has never seen him since. He answers none of her letters."

"But the police——"

"Think of the scandal, brother."

"Well," said Jerome, "I don't see what's to be done."

"In this case nothing can be done. But, Brother McWade——"

The voice of the divine became deep and impressive, like a tolling bell. He took up his cigar, but it had gone out. He relighted it, regarding Jerome solemnly above the leaping match flame. Then he resumed:

"Brother McWade, there is another case. This young man has now begun to prey on the vanity which you have likewise planted, albeit unconsciously, in our church's benefactress, Mrs. Charlotte Chew."

"Oho!"

"The impudence!" Mr. Harper began to pace the floor. "Last night, when I called, I found him there, smoking cigarettes. The young degenerate!"

"Where is Elisha?"

"In California."

"Well," said Jerome, "I don't see how this concerns me."

"Brother McWade, if you would warn her!"

"That's a delicate job. She's a good customer of mine. Why don't you warn her yourself?"

"Ah, how can I, without disclosing Sister Pettit's secret? A secret, so to speak, of the confessional."

But Jerome shook his head. "I won't interfere."

"Then—then—if they marry——"

In his distress Mr. Harper wrung his hands. Jerome, regarding him curiously, said:

"Do you know when he will meet her next?"

"He will meet her to-morrow afternoon as she leaves your parlour."

"Well, I'll see what I can do."

"It is no more than your duty, brother. But, all the same, I thank you. I thank you from my heart." Mr. Harper took up his hat. His manner denoted humble gratitude and unspeakable relief. "Good-night. God bless you, brother!"

"Stay and eat something," Jerome cried heartily. "I always have supper here. It's fine to live in a hotel."

"It must be. But isn't it expensive?"

"Some weeks my bill will run to sixty dollars."

"Can you afford that?"

"I wouldn't be here if I couldn't. I'm a business man."

Mr. Harper's roving eye lit on a photograph of Barbara Gwynne.

"What a success," he said, "Miss Gwynne is having. I understand she gets five hundred a week."

"That's about the figure."

"My wife saw yesterday at a fashionable milliner's a hat labelled 'The Vassa.'"

"There's a 'Vassa' cigar, too."

Jerome rang, and a waiter brought a menu. Studying it, he said:

"Blue Points on the shell. Stout. Porterhouse steak and mushrooms. Cold boiled ham. Cheddar cheese. How does that suit you, doctor?"

Rubbing his hands in delight, Mr. Harper replied:

"Excellently well, all but the stout. As you know, I abstain."

"Rubbish. It is criminal to refuse a wholesome stimulant on a cold night like this."

"As you will, then, Brother McWade. As you will."

.

Jerome spent the next morning with his advertisement writer. He was now advertising, in a hundred newspapers and magazines, the Zenobia products—the skin foods, complexion soaps, blackhead lotions, astringents, creams, vinegars, and hair tonics that he made in his Cinnaminson factory. It paid him to advertise—he could afford to advertise—because he sold his wares for ten, twenty, even fifty times their worth.

After modifying slightly the lies in a dozen advertisements, he lunched at Wilby's Oyster Bay. At Wilby's gathered the fairly prosperous business men, the lawyers and politicians, of the city. These men ate hot instead of cold luncheons, they sat on

chairs instead of pegs, and they shaved thrice instead of twice a week.

He lunched on an oyster stew, hurried back to his desk, and took up a metal contrivance resembling a short glove-finger. It was a widely-advertised clip that, worn at night, improved the shape of the nose. Though the clip was patented, he had almost resolved to manufacture it himself: the patent could easily be dodged; and he examined a sheet of sketches suggesting such slight variations as would enable him to steal with impunity the patentee's idea. It would be fun to make these clips. They would cost about five cents, they would sell at about fifty cents: a thousand per cent. profit! But the advertising would eat up most of that.

As he finished a letter asking his lawyers to pass on the legality of the clip's theft, a manicurist informed him that Mrs. Chew was about to depart. He hurried to the window. A young man, tall and robust, leaned carelessly against the door-post of the entrance.

"Hell!" said Jerome. "This won't do." And he saw in fancy his Peanut Street entrance thronged with young poor men, as a stage-door is thronged with old rich men.

Ross Dagar, on Mrs. Chew's appearance, gave a start of joy, and, hat in hand, he bent over the squat old woman chivalrously and tenderly.

Jerome followed them. They sauntered out Peanut Street. In front of the Westminster Mrs. Chew extended to Ross Dagar some money which the youth accepted with a hurried, merely formal protest. Then they entered the hotel.

Jerome was annoyed, but at the same time he could not help admiring Ross Dagar's astuteness.

"If Tank would brace up," he mused, "what a business man he'd make!"

As he paced before the hotel, he could see, by rising on tiptoe, Mrs. Chew's face and the back of Dagar's head. Mrs. Chew drank tea. Dagar consumed great mugs of beer.

When, a half-hour later, they came forth, Jerome followed them to the station. They took the Cinnaminson train, and he did likewise. But even at Cinnaminson they did not separate. Entering the Chew brougham, they ascended Green Lane.

Jerome hastened to Garret's. Thence he pursued them in a carriage. But half way up the hill he encountered, much to his surprise, Ross Dagar coming down again on foot.

"Hello, Tank, where are you off to?"

"I'm going to town to look up some of the boys."

"Come and have dinner with me, will you?"

"Why, yes, with pleasure."

"We'll just stop at the chicken farm first."

Entering the carriage, Ross Dagar plunged spiritedly into the narrative of a recent bar-room triumph—a victory he had gained over an alderman in a violent political discussion, half argument, half personal abuse. Jerome was reminded of a stinging phrase wherewith, as a grocery clerk, he had once silenced the old grocer. Thus the young men, recounting success after success, jolted, through the dismal winter twilight, over the Ridge Road's hummocks of frozen mud. The ride to the chicken farm seemed strangely short.

"We'll make no noise," Jerome whispered, as they got down; and he opened the farm gate very quietly. "I am losing money here. So I like to surprise Bill Stroud now and then."

"To see how the land lies, eh?".

On tiptoe, with pursed lips, they ascended the path. They had a severe and virtuous air. At the sound of music they halted, regarding one another with shocked eyes. Then they advanced again.

Gaining the kitchen window, Jerome peered in with a scowl. Bill Stroud, seated at the head of a long table, was entertaining a dozen friends: a dozen young men and girls, gaudily dressed, whose hue ranged from amber to deep chocolate. Some of the young men and girls were finishing a supper of corn-pone, cabbage, and boiled bacon with a

black molasses sauce. Others bent over a keg of beer that stood in a corner. A blind boy behind the red hot stove played a cake walk, and one lithe couple danced.

They danced well, that pair. The youth, his arms crooked jauntily, leaning far back, bounded forward in time to the music. The girl, too, leant far back as she advanced; she held her skirts breast high, lifting her round knees, and swinging white cascades of lace from side to side.

"Is it any wonder I'm losing money here?"

"They dance well," Ross Dagar answered.

Jerome regarded them. The accordeon crashed, their bodies touched, the white froth of the girl's skirts brushed back and forth across the youth's face.

"They do dance well," he agreed.

And he turned away. After all, what good would it do to burst in on his employee? They seemed very happy, those coons. Why spoil their evening?

"We're all entitled to an occasional good time," he said, leading the way towards the carriage.

And at dinner, as the second bottle of champagne neared its end, he repeated that perilous opinion.

"My creed exactly," said Ross Dagar. "Let's have cigars and coffee, and afterwards I'll take you to see two very fine girls."

But the coffee cleared and strengthened Jerome's mind, and he now approached the task before him calmly.

"Tank, I want to talk to you."

"Fire away."

"You're apt to get yourself in trouble."

"What do you mean?"

"You'll get yourself in trouble, Tank, if you don't stop preying on women."

"What the devil do you mean, McWade?"

"I mean Mrs. Silas Pettit and so forth."

Ross Dagar flushed, and, bending forward towards Jerome, he said eagerly:

"Preying on women, eh? Well, what is your business but preying on women?"

"You must be drunk," said Jerome haughtily.

But Ross cried:

"Don't you get women's money by pretending to make them young and pretty again? Well, I got Mrs. Pettit's money by pretending that she really was young and pretty."

"You did, eh? Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I am ashamed of myself. But aren't you ashamed of yourself, too?"

"Me ashamed? No, of course not."

"Why?"

"Because I am engaged in a lawful business. I

improve women's health and looks. But you—why, you're apt to land in gaol."

"I shouldn't want to go to gaol," Ross Dagar admitted. "Who told you——"

"Never mind about that. You'd better return Mrs. Pettit's money, though."

"I'm going to, damn you. It's worrying me to death. I never intended to keep it, anyhow. You see, I happened to meet some of the boys that night. But I'll pay her back. Look here."

Ross Dagar exhibited proudly a large roll of banknotes.

"Robbing Peter to pay Paul," Jerome said to himself. But this roll of banknotes, all the same, impressed him deeply. This roll of banknotes had been obtained, as it is every business man's highest ambition to obtain money, with a minimum output of time and labour. This roll of banknotes had cost Dagar only an hour of pleasant converse and beer drinking.

"Tank," he cried, "I need a man like you. Do you want a job?"

"What kind of a job?"

"Well, at the start, I'd put you on the road selling massage machines to barbers."

"Good pay?"

"Commission and expenses, with a guarantee of thirty dollars a week."

This was the first real appreciation, the first real offer of a job, that Ross Dagar had ever received. It moved him profoundly.

"Thanks, old man," he said. "I won't disappoint you. You'll see."

"And that other business—you'll give it up, eh?"

"Sure, old man. I'll return Mrs. Pettit's loan and Mrs. Chew's as well. I'll make a hit with those massage machines."

"Oh, I know you!" cried Jerome. "You'll get there. I may give you, before long, some important political work."

"Politics is my game," said Ross Dagar. He finished in rapid sequence his champagne, coffee and Tarragone. "Now pay your bill, McWade, and we'll look up those two girls."

But Jerome, swallowing the last of his sweet *liqueur,* became suddenly a little sick. He threw away his cigar. And in a shuddering revulsion from all that alcohol and tobacco his soul turned to Barbara. The thought of Barbara was like a breath of mountain air. . . Barbara or nothing . . .

"Damn your girls," he said.

He rose unsteadily.

"Damn your girls. I'm going to bed."

XVII

MRS. WOODFORD, after her relegation to the background, decided to open a beauty parlour of her own. To this end she set to work resolutely, but it was a long time ere George Smollett and half-a-dozen other capitalists were persuaded to establish her.

Established, she plunged at once into "ornamental" or "plastic" surgery. Ornamental or plastic surgery paid, but she could not delight in it as she had delighted in the old-fashioned beauty treatments—in vibratory massage, face-steaming, hip-ironing—for, with its blood, it sickened her. And she would never forget the horror of Dr. Hilary Patterson's first operation.

It was an operation for the removal of horizontal lines from the brow. The patient, an actor of forty-eight or fifty years, sat, stiff with fright, in the operating chair, listening to Dr. Patterson's jokes with a ghastly smile.

"You see," said Patterson, passing a razor through a gas-jet, "the skin of the forehead has stretched. It has got too big. Well, we'll tighten it up. Then these nasty wrinkles will all disappear."

"It's a simple operation, I presume?"

"Oh, very simple."

Patterson shaved a transverse channel across the patient's scalp above the brow. Then he filled a syringe with cocaine.

"It's very simple," he repeated. "I make an incision here"—he patted the shaven channel—"I draw the skin up tight, I cut off the half-inch or so of surplus, then I sew up my wound. The hair, growing in again, will hide the scar."

"It won't be painful?"

"Oh, no; the cocaine will deaden the pain."

He injected the cocaine, he made a graceful pass with a gleaming knife, and blood oozed slowly forth. Dr. Patterson, with hands dabbled in blood, began to pull the skin of the forehead upward.

Mrs. Woodford broke into a cold sweat. The room swam before her eyes, then changed to grey cloud. A feeling of death overcame her. Tottering to her office, she fell on the couch in a faint.

When she returned to the operating room, the

patient, at once jubilant and uneasy, stood before the mirror, stroking his brow's smooth, tight surface.

"You guarantee this?"

"Up to the hilt."

"The wrinkles are gone; but I don't like the strained look."

"Oh, that will pass off."

"There's some difficulty, too, about closing the eyes."

"It will pass off," Patterson repeated carelessly.

A regiment of young women came to purchase the dimples and the permanent flush that Mrs. Woodford advertised. The dimple operation failed from the start, but the permanent flush at the beginning promised to yield permanent satisfaction. It was a simple scarlet injection, a kind of tattooing, and it looked very well for a week or two, then it faded away. But when a young woman, furious over its disappearance, demanded her money back, Dr. Patterson would only consent to give her another injection free.

A stream of noseless persons horrified and saddened Mrs. Woodford. One by one they entered Patterson's office in gloomy excitement. One by one they departed joyfully, stroking noses that the jocular young surgeon had created by means of paraffine.

This operation, a bloodless one, was conducted in an atmosphere of low comedy. Patterson, as he melted over an alcohol lamp a mixture of paraffine, isinglass and vaseline, would say gaily:

"Of course, my boy, this paraffine nose won't be as beautiful as Dante's, but it will get you a girl and a job, and neither girls nor jobs are open to the noseless."

Then, having applied the local anæsthetic, he would slowly inject melted paraffine from a syringe into the shapeless lump of flesh above his patient's nostrils. As the paraffine hardened in the tissues, he would mould with his fingers the nose that was gradually rising.

"What shall we make it—Greek or Roman?" he would cry.

And in the end the patient would actually have a nose, a nose of mingled paraffine and flesh, and the improvement in his appearance would be marvellous.

But this paraffine nose would be a peril. It would be apt to cause blood poisoning. Furthermore, in hot weather, it would be apt to melt and spread, whereupon its owner, applying ice before a mirror, would have to build it up again with moulding finger strokes.

Dr. Patterson set back protruding ears. He removed scars, moles, birthmarks and superfluous

hair. But the majority of his operations failed, most of his work harmed rather than benefited the appearance, and in the shape of furious letters, of terrible scenes, of bland, blackmailing lawyers, disaster threatened to overwhelm Mrs. Woodford.

She would have been quite overwhelmed but for the local press. The local press printed nothing of the harm that the ignorant and reckless Patterson worked daily on the community. But the local press, for betraying its readers, for cheating them of news so important to their welfare, extorted, in the form of advertising, a very heavy bribe.

George Smollett of course abandoned her. Then Patterson, the week before the first of her eight damage suits was to come on, fled with her pretty secretary. In her despair she appealed to Jerome.

She had come to this pass through ignorance. She had really believed Patterson a reputable and skilled surgeon. She had really expected, by beautifying the ugly, to grow rich.

In the beginning Patterson's failures had troubled her, but the young man had stifled her incipient fears. This patient had disobeyed his orders, that one had ceased her visits too soon; and, at any rate, all Patterson's errors put together were

going to prove infinitesimal—oh, she would see!—beside his innumerable successes.

So she had drifted on, perceiving, bit by bit, finally realising to the full, the wickedness, the unprofitable, silly wickedness, of this business on which she was embarked.

And it was such a loathsome business, a business of groans, hospital smells, blood; whereas in Jerome's gay beauty parlours there had been only laughter, pretty girls and perfumes.

She had decided to abandon the business, but, as she waited to abandon it without loss or scandal, it entangled her more and more, till now . . . till now. . .

Jerome, to her astonishment, came to her rescue readily. He made her travelling inspector of his long chain of beauty parlours, and his lawyers settled her eight damage suits for a song.

As, in her new post, she sped luxuriously in a Pullman train from Cleveland to Chicago, from Los Angeles to Monterey, Mrs. Woodford often admitted that she had underrated Jerome, that success was not so easy as she had thought, that Jerome assuredly owed none of his success to such a failure as herself.

XVIII

FORD turned from the microscope with a sigh.—Too hot to work. He was, besides, jaded and unstrung from a sleepless night. He sank into a chair and closed his eyes.

Ford could only work when in a state of perfect, buoyant health. To maintain such health he sacrificed, with reluctance, many things. Thus, a devotee of tobacco, he only smoked on his holidays; and in like manner he eschewed wine and coffee, though to the flavour and the stimulus of both his being made exquisite response. Furthermore, since work demanded tranquillity and devotion, he shunned love.

The joys of life all called him, but work, thanks to his intelligence, uttered a more imperious call; and through the turmoil of temptations natural to youth and wealth his intelligence curbed and guided him, as a driver curbs and guides a fiery horse.

But last night he could not sleep for thinking of Barbara. . .

A wave of poisonous fatigue passed over him. Nevertheless he rose again, and, focussing the microscope, he beheld a riot of trypanosomes. The trypanosomes resembled short, fat eels, and fiercely and continually they lashed out with their tails. Before their indomitable energy the phagocytes, the blood police, the slayers and devourers of marauding germs, were helpless. The phagocytes, which were like round jellyfish, could not envelop and absorb these huge and violent germs of sleeping sickness as they enveloped and absorbed smaller, quieter germs. The phagocytes were hustled and jostled by the terrible trypanosomes like children in a mob of madmen.

But fatigue again surged through the young man's veins. He went to the thermometer, it marked eighty-nine degrees, and pushing back his damp hair wearily, he saw the sea. He saw the blue sea tumbling and flashing in a great sunshine. He felt on his hot brow the cold, pure sea wind. Stately breakers crashed on a lonely beach. Gulls circled in a sky of brilliant blue. And he and Barbara, amid wastes of white sand, amid the vibrating glitter of sunshine, walked slowly, side by side, at the edge of the gliding foam.

He bathed and dressed, and, hailing a hansom,

he drove through the heat and silence to Barbara's flat. She was at home, Miss Hanch said, and the next moment the young girl herself appeared.

He took her thin hand. "Barbara, I want to ask a favour of you."

"What favour?" And she withdrew her hand so gently, so reluctantly, its withdrawal seemed a more exquisite caress than its remaining.

"Come to Cape May with me."

"When?"

"Now; at once."

Barbara mused.

"Come, won't you?"

She glanced at Miss Hanch. "Would Abercrombie mind?"

"I—er—oh, I don't think so," Miss Hanch faltered.

"Won't you come?"

"Yes!" she cried suddenly. She clapped her hands and laughed. "Oh, it will be jolly! When can we get a train?"

"Good! At noon!"

They met, at noon, in the empty station, and on the ride to Philadelphia they had a "buffet car" to themselves. They lunched in the buffet car, at an exorbitant cost, on nasty messes taken from tins—tinned ham, beans, lobster—and after their abominable lunch they beguiled the hot and dusty ride

with picture magazines. In the parched fields many advertisements of Jerome S. McWade's Zenobia Cream confronted them, and, turning wearily from the parched fields, they met the same advertisements again in all their picture magazines. Suddenly Miss Hanch looked up and said:

"Oh, here is Millicent Mortimer Miller's article on vivisection!"

And she read aloud:

"'Vivisection, in less than a hundred years, will be regarded by medical men as religious men now regard the burning of witches and the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition.'"

Barbara laughed. "What is your reply to that, Dr. Ford?"

"How can one reply to such filth?" said the young man. "Vivisection has banished small-pox, it has changed diphtheria from a deadly to a harmless ailment; and yet this woman, in order to make ten or twelve dollars, likens it to the torturing of witches. The only proper reply to her would be a clout over the head."

"Read on, Miss Hanch," said Barbara, and Miss Hanch read:

"'Dr. Henry Ford, a vivisector at the Lester Institute, declares that vivisected animals are spared all needless suffering, yet here is a description

given by Gross of one of his 'moral experiments': 'I cut the unborn puppies from a living mother dog and placed them before her in order to see whether she would exhibit the same affection for them as for those naturally born.'"

"Lies! Lies!"

"But why should Millicent Mortimer write lies?"

"Why should the *World Magazine* print lies? To make money, that is why!"

.

Languid with the heat, they reached Cape May at five, and like a host the sea wind welcomed them. Cold, tonic, salt, they breathed it in delightedly. It filled them with energy and joy, colouring their pale faces, brightening their tired eyes.

"Oh, what big breakers!" cried Barbara, as they drove to the hotel. "What white dunes! How the reeds wave in the wind!"

The enormous hotel, built of wood, resembled a barn, and their rooms were as bare as cells. But their open windows faced the sea; the salt wind shook their clean white curtains.

Dinner, in a great, bare dining hall, was execrable: a tinned soup, a chicken spoiled by years of cold storage, and a couple of tinned vegetables. But before them spread the sea again, and as they

dined the sea grew vague and wistful, a few stars came out, and the ruined pier had a strange, sad beauty in the dusk.

After dinner they strolled through the town. The town was but an ugly huddle of wooden cottages. And at every cottage window sat, in shirt-sleeves and slippers, a Philadelphia aristocrat, pipe in mouth, reading the *Bulletin*.

The next morning Miss Hanch had a headache, and Ford and Barbara, after a seven o'clock breakfast, walked to Cape May Point alone. A long walk, on an immense white beach, amid the joyous movement and noise and glitter of sea and wind and sun.

"How gay it is!" cried Barbara.

And breakers crashed. Sheets of snowy foam glided over the level sand. The dunes' coarse grasses waved in the wind. The blue sea tumbled and flashed.

"If life," said Ford, "could be like this always!"

"Couldn't it be?" said Barbara.

"No."

"Why not?"

He regarded her moodily. As though drenched her blown dress clung to her. She was as sweet and fresh as the glittering, windy seascape. Nevertheless he said:

"I'm young, but I know well that life is hideous."

"It's beautiful now."

"Not to me."

"But you just said——"

"Well, I was wrong. Life is hideous even now."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm in love."

"If you're in love," said Barbara, "why don't you marry?"

He gave her another gloomy glance. She was so exquisite in her white dress, it seemed useless to discuss with her aught save jewels or ribbons; but he knew her sturdy mind, and with a faint smile he said:

"Marriage is a sin."

"A sin? How is it a sin?"

"Because it is based on a lie. It is based on the permanence and holiness of love. But love is a mere transient appetite."

"Do you mean," she said, "that it's only a girl's beauty you'd love?"

"Yes."

"And you'd stop loving her as soon as her beauty began to fade?"

"Ah, long before, perhaps. But no sooner than she'd stop loving me."

"That isn't true."

"It's true of everybody. And yet——"

He turned to her, but her gaze was fixed on the sea.

"And yet I'm in love, and I believe my love is different—I believe it will last for ever."

"But of course it won't," said Barbara.

"Of course it won't."

She laughed oddly. "Well, here, at any rate," she said, "is Cape May Point."

And dropping their discussion, they strolled a long while, in a kind of awe, through the silent, clean and sun-drenched desolation of the abandoned watering place. Strange were the empty hotels, the empty streets, the empty dancing pavilions, all choked with white sea sand. The clean white sand was winning back the clean white wreck of a town. And from the rank grasses of a hundred forsaken gardens rose, at their approach, the cause of all that ruin—blue clouds of mosquitoes, whining faintly, that settled by the score upon their backs and shoulders.

The sea had fallen when they turned. The beach was vaster. They walked on a floor of fine sand as firm as marble. Here and there, in clear pools left by the tide, small crabs scurried busily.

"I can't get over what you said about love," Barbara mused. "I know you're wrong."

"You know I'm right."

"Well," she said, "it's sad if love doesn't last."

"It's the saddest thing in life."

But Barbara, frowning, faltered:

"All the same, I don't believe this ugly, animal love is the foundation of marriage. No; it's the other love—affection. Marriage is beautiful. A man and a girl love one another, they marry, they have children, they grow old. They comfort one another in the sadness and pain of old age. Their children cheer them. And finally one helps the other to face death. Oh, I can't explain it, but—but—marriage is beautiful."

Her voice shook. He said gently:

"But there are no perfect marriages such as you describe."

"Of course there are no perfect ones," said Barbara impatiently. "We ourselves are not perfect; we all have blemishes that we hate; but do we kill ourselves on that account? You, though, because marriage has its faults, would do away with it altogether."

"Marriage," he returned, "is nothing but faults. Its only excuse was the welfare of the children. But children can be avoided now."

She blushed. "Oh, can they?" she stammered confusedly. And amid an awkward silence they quickened their pace in order not to miss the bathing hour.

The bathing beach on their return swarmed with hundreds of Philadelphia aristocrats in short blue bathing garb. The men's white legs were bare, but the women all wore black stockings. It was an odd and animated scene. Here a half-dozen débutantes, in skirts above their knees, tossed a tennis ball. Here, in order to get very brown, a half-dozen youths lay on their backs upon the sand with faces upturned to the sun. Clubmen and matrons, reclining side by side as in a bed, flirted elegantly.

Barbara and Miss Hanch and Ford bathed in the cool sea, and after they were dressed again they basked in the warm sunshine. A group of Philadelphia aristocrats basked near them. Recognising Barbara, the aristocrats glanced at her continually, while in loud tones they talked of aristocratic things —polo, yachts, Newport. But Barbara, quiet and grave in her chair, seemed to hear none of their talk.

Three determined college girls advanced. Baggy blouses, cut like men's shirts, made their slim bodies resemble those of fat old women. Heavy shoes gave their slender feet the proportions of a waiter's. The sun had turned to a rusty brown the roses and lilies of their cheeks, and from their red, inflamed noses the skin was peeling in white scales.

"How did our campus dance go?" said one of the college girls, her gaze fixed on Barbara. "Let us see if we remember it."

And the resolute trio began to dance on the soft sand. They hopped heavily about, they kicked high, and their clear and innocent eyes sought the young actress's in wistful appeal. Nearer and nearer they drew. But Barbara rose.

"Come," she said, "it's time for lunch."

After lunch they went crabbing. In a catboat they sailed up narrow channels amid reedy marshes, and every little while they ran aground in foul black mud. The heat and stench were terrible. Big green flies bit them with a bite like a pin-prick, and they caught, by means of rotten fish-heads tied to ends of twine, eight crabs.

Miss Hanch, overcome with the fatigue of crabbing, retired to her room as soon as dinner was over, and Barbara and Ford were left alone.

Alone, an intense embarrassment seized them. They lingered awhile over their coffee in a distant corner of the huge hall. Then Ford said:

"It is hot here. Shall we go outside?"

Barbara rose. He placed her white cloak on her bare shoulders. She followed him forth in silence, spellbound by a kind of joyous dread.

On the terrace they found a solitary bench that faced the sea. The sea, vague in a shimmering dusk, crashed on the dim beach softly. A crescent moon trailed luminous silver veils in the restless water.

The young man said:

"How happy it makes me to be with you, Barbara."

"But you said this morning——"

"Oh, I didn't mean what I said this morning. I love you. Will you marry me?"

She hurriedly disengaged her waist from his arm.

"No," she replied. "If I married you, you'd tire of me."

"No, I——"

"Yes, you would. You said so."

"Barbara, listen——"

But, seated upright beside him, she covered her face with her long white hands. The cloak fell from her shoulders. The moonlight flowed and gleamed along her arms and bosom and bowed neck.

"It's true," she sighed. "And it's cruel, it's too cruel, for I'd never tire of you. Never, never, never."

"Ah, you would. Everybody tires. You would."

"Well, then," said Barbara, "we mustn't marry. But we'll always be friends."

"No. Friendship isn't enough. Is it enough for you?"

"Yes."

"Then a girl is different from a man."

"How is she different?"

"How indeed? Who can know the mystery of a girl's heart? But tell me: is it possible for a girl in love to be content with her lover's friendship?"

"Yes, if that will make him happy. That is what she wants—to make him happy."

"Do you want to make me happy?"

"Yes."

"Then . . . Barbara . . ."

"What?"

"Will you leave the door of your room unlocked to-night?"

She shivered violently. "But . . ."

"You are cold. Let me draw your cloak about you."

"No, I am not cold. But . . . but I . . ."

"I am ashamed," he said. "I've hurt you."

"No, you haven't hurt me."

"Then, Barbara . . . will you . . ."

She rose. She stood and looked down in his face gravely. Then she bent over him, he was enveloped in beauty and perfume, there fell on his brow the softest, lightest kiss. . .

"Yes?" he said. His tone was rather shocked than joyous.

But she had already gone.

XIX

FORD, left alone, leaned back upon the bench, thrust his hands in his pockets, and extended his legs. His chin sank on his breast. With brows knit in puzzled thought, he tried to fathom the depths of Barbara's girl soul.

Had she consented? Yes, perhaps. But why had she consented? For her own sake? Or for his?

The unfathomable depths of a girl's soul. . .

She had consented, but he felt no joy. And yet, as an instrument of pleasure, she would surely be incomparable and divine. From her beauty shone a light, and to be drawn, by her fresh arms, into the very heart of that light . . . to drown in the exquisite glitter of white flesh . . . But his mind dropped the picture.

She had consented, and he felt no joy because he forgot her flesh, absorbed in her soul.

He rose suddenly. He hurried down the de-

serted boardwalk. Though it was not yet ten, the Philadelphia aristocrats had all gone home to bed.

Had he done wrong? No. For he had acted honestly and sincerely, he had done nothing wrong . . . unless, perhaps, he had grieved her?

With a sigh he descended to the beach. The moon was gone now. Innumerable stars spangled the sky's soft depths.

Ford, pacing the sands, thought of marriage. Marriage (if unions so brief and casual might be dignified by that name), marriage with primitive man had begun in childhood, as soon as love began, and the average primitive man and the average primitive woman had doubtless contracted fifty, a hundred, even two hundred marriages—as many almost as the average idler of to-day contracts. And marriage of that casual and brief sort had continued for æons and æons. And now the human frame was formed for such marriage as indisputably as it was formed for upright walking. The present law of marriage seemed to Ford as irksome and wrong as a law compelling man to walk on all fours.

To walk on all fours! Young men and maidens, intoxicated by passion, believed they could stick to that gait for life. And when, cramped at last beyond endurance, they erected themselves, what ugly griefs ensued, what scandal, what cruel and

insane laughter, as of a world that had suddenly lost its wits. . . He frowned. . . Yes, marriage was impossible. Marriage suited only those mean souls who broke its law secretly.

But he realised his youth and inexperience, and above all he realised that he had perhaps hurt Barbara . . . Barbara . . . was she now awaiting him?

He entered Stewart's. He ordered champagne. There ensued a sound of chopping underground, and the man bore in a huge wooden bucket wherein a half-bottle of wine stood amid bits of ice.

"Now bring me paper and ink," he said.

He spoke without premeditation, almost involuntarily; and almost involuntarily he began to write. And as he wrote his distress vanished; a strange sense of peace and joy uplifted him.

"DEAR BARBARA,—My mind tells me that I was right, but something stronger than my mind declares that I was wrong.

"Yes, it was all wrong—pollution.

"My mind tells me that to say 'pollution' is absurd. But something stronger than my mind repeats 'Pollution!' and though I know that this something is ridiculous, yet I can't help obeying it, and I can't help believing that to obey it is best.

"After you left me I was wretched. I pictured you, waiting, waiting, in the dark. I tried to read

your soul. In what spirit, thinking what thoughts, did you wait? I will never know, you will never say: for you, with the divine and compassionate wisdom of woman, will always in silence let me believe about you what I desire to believe.

"I forget my unanswerable arguments. All I want is to marry you, to please you, to make you happy."

Summoning the attendant, he said:

"Will you have this note delivered at once? There'll be an answer."

And he lighted a fresh cigarette. The champagne was cooler now. He re-filled his glass and set the bottle back in the wooden bucket. His eyes shone, he smiled dreamily, and blowing clouds of aromatic smoke, sipping the exhilarating and cold wine, he mused.

His logic had failed him, conquered by his love. From this exquisite young girl he did not want to take: he wanted to give, to give with both hands, to give all—name, fortune, freedom.

In warm and powerful waves happiness surged through his being. How splendid that he, with his clear mind, could feel like this! He, knowing the absolute falsity and the terrible cost of such feelings, was nevertheless borne away by them. Hence they must be very strong.

He finished his champagne regretfully. It left

him without any occupation, though he continued to smoke cigarette after cigarette. His mouth grew dry. An hour passed. The little room, so bright and gay before, now seemed a lonely hole.

"Here is your answer, sir."

He opened the twisted note and read:

"If you had asked me yesterday!—BARBARA."

He turned the note over. "Is this—is this all?" he faltered.

"That's all, sir."

"What kept you so long, then?"

"Well, sir, she made me wait close on to an hour."

He cleared his throat. He took up his hat mechanically.

"Nothing else, sir?"

"No, nothing else."

After a wretched night he rose early. But Barbara, early as it was, had gone. In what spirit had she gone?

He would never know.

XX

JEROME S. MCWADE, spread out like a starfish, was being shaved, and, while the barber shaved him, two bootblacks worked on his boots, and two manicurists polished his nails. This scene, which illustrated well his rise in fortune, was laid in New York, under a glare of electricity, in a subterranean barber-shop of onyx and gold. A short, swift scene, typical of New York's ostentatious time-saving, and ten minutes later Jerome entered the directors' room of the Universal Bank.

He owed his first real rise to banking. He said one day to Ross Dagar:

"Tank, our city deposits its cash in the Commercial Trust. Its balance averages three millions, and it draws no interest. Now, Tank, can you get through an ordinance changing the city's account from the Commercial to the Universal?"

"I think I can," Ross Dagar answered. "I'll let you know what it will cost."

Ross announced, a fortnight later, that it would cost sixty thousand dollars. Jerome accordingly procured sixty thousand dollars from George Smollett, the Universal Bank's chief stockholder, and Ross distributed this bribe among the "city fathers." The municipal funds were then transferred from the Commercial to the Universal Bank.

And Jerome, in recognition of good work, was elected the Universal's president, and one per cent. was allowed him on the great non-interest-bearing account he had secured.

.

Investing heavily in a cold storage company, he soon had a stake in a score of cold storage warehouses.

There, in a perpetual winter twilight, amid coils of pipes all white with glistening frost, tons of fish, flesh and fowl reposed. They entered those dim Arctic silences when they were at their cheapest. They remained, frozen hard as granite, till a rise in prices came. Then, with prices at the highest, they emerged, thawed out.

They took their place in the market as fresh food. They commanded the same price as fresh food. And only experienced marketers could tell them from fresh food. There are no experienced marketers in America.

And if they did not rot before the marketer got them home, they proved, on being cooked, to lack all taste. Fish, flesh, fowl—the disappointed marketer could hardly tell them apart; but, soft and watery, they seemed to have been soaked together in a tub for years.

Yet the cold storage company paid good dividends, and when a clamour rose up against cold storage food, when some legislator proposed a law for the labelling of all cold storage products, the company never lacked a fund wherewith to kill the mooted legislation.

.

Become a heavy shareholder in the Carbondale, he naturally took a leading part in the Oil City and Carbondale merger. A merger's simplicity astonished him.

The merger was, indeed, simplicity itself. The two lines, bought for thirty millions, were simply merged and sold to the public for seventy millions. Forty millions of profit.

The Oil City & Carbondale Railroad was, of course, crippled by the dividends it now had to pay. Paying dividends so enormous, it was inevitably undermanned, its roadbed and rolling stock were inevitably bad, its accidents inevitably terrible. On the Oil City & Carbondale it became, indeed, a

common occurrence for a director or a vice-president, travelling in his private car, to be killed with all his family in a derailment or rear-end collision.

.

He belonged to a trust. In this capacity he made tariff laws. Illiterate and unshaven senators, clad in frock coats and sombreros, accepted with a kind of jocular shame his bribes, and in return imposed a fatal tariff on such goods as he banned. Thus the trust, with foreign and domestic competition alike slain, could charge the American people any price it pleased.

His work was not all successful. For every success, indeed, he had a dozen disheartening failures. But he allowed no failure to dishearten him. Failure, on the contrary, acted on the strong young man like a cold bath, like a tonic. After every failure he resumed his work with a more splendid vigour.

He lived, of course, in New York. His apartment fronted the Park. At eight o'clock he rose, at a quarter after eight he plunged into his porphyry tub, and at nine, in a monumental frock coat, he entered his breakfast room, where, at a little white table by a window, he ate ravenously of grape

fruit, oatmeal, grilled ham, new-laid eggs, fried potatoes and superb coffee.

He always wore a frock coat and top hat—a New York frock coat with colossal shoulders, a flamboyant New York top hat. His socks, underwear and pyjamas were of silk. His boots were patent leather. His overcoat was lined with sealskin. A diamond glittered in his cravat. On his lapel a flower glowed.

Sleek as a bridegroom—save, perhaps, for some slight need of shaving—he reached his office at ten, and he worked very hard till seven. Then, if he had no banquet to attend, he dined alone.

He passed the evening at his desk alone, now lost in financial dreams, now figuring feverishly, with his gold fountain-pen, upon the backs of envelopes, all manner of documents spread before him. At midnight he retired. He always slept like a log . . . unless, indeed, he allowed his thoughts to dwell on Barbara.

His one social indulgence was the banquet. The banquet was, in fact, the one social indulgence of all those millionaires who, like himself, had swooped down on New York from Des Moines, Pittsburg, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, the ends of the earth.

They prospered in New York, those millionaires. They built there sumptuous palaces. Their names

were in all mouths. But New York's aristocracy, though hardly a generation removed from just such men as themselves, treated them like dirt. Hence, in their loneliness, their banquets innumerable.

In the showy black and white of evening dress, ranged in long lines side by side at tables strewn with roses, they all looked alike as they feasted. The same Roman profiles, the same alert, hard air, the same coarse comeliness—they might all have been brothers.

In their hunger for admiration they presented gold loving-cups to one another, praising in long and eloquent speeches one another's wisdom, courage, philanthropy. Strange depths of feeling would then be revealed. The orator's nasal voice would tremble and break, and all those bright, hard eyes would fill with tears.

Their wives, from balconies, gazed down upon their sentimental orgies.

They were beyond belief romantic. Hence, as they grew older, their wards, their young and beautiful wards, who had formerly been typewriters in their offices. Now and then a ward flashed into sudden notoriety. Her motor-car ran down a drunken policeman, or she was cited as co-respondent in a divorce suit. Then the press would proclaim her Banker Wright's ward, and Banker Wright would announce in voluble and indignant

newspaper interviews that his relations with his ward were pure. He was educating her for the stage.

They were horribly vain. Not their daughters' vanity, but their own it was that continually drove their daughters to contract with noblemen marriages tragic and vile.

And they were as sensitive as flowers. When, having broken this law or that, exposure came, with the certainty of arrest and gaol, they collapsed on the instant. They took immediately to their beds. Shame and fright consumed them like a fire. Surrounded by their families, they soon died.

Wonderful men! Their incomparable energy might have changed the ugly and wretched world to a happy garden. But they wasted all that energy in gambling, lying, cheating and stealing.

XXI

On Ford's return to the institute in the autumn, a letter from his chief awaited him.

——" so devote yourself to tetanus. Now that the bacillus has been found, there is no reason why we should not get an antitetanic serum. Begin at the beginning, go on to the end, and, when the result is failure, repeat your series of experiments. Repeat them over and over. It is the only way to succeed."

With a kind of joy he set to work. And he abandoned, in order to work well, all the indulgences that since his visit to Cape May he had resumed. Tea, coffee, tobacco and wine no longer jangled his nerves. He exercised vigorously for two hours every afternoon. Thus, in his health at least, he found that perfection for which, hopefully and vainly, he always sought in life. Exuberant health made every moment beautiful and precious. He savoured every delicate moment as an epicure savours every mouthful.

His experiments were to begin at the beginning. He would, therefore, catch his own microbes. Since the home of the tetanus microbe is the soil, he took portions of stable mould and inserted them under the skin of guinea pigs.

One of the guinea pigs developed an abscess. He drew a little matter from the heart of the abscess, and this matter he subjected to a heat of eighty degrees Centigrade—a nearly boiling heat which only tetanus microbes can withstand. Then, in order to find out whether any tetanus microbes now lived in the otherwise sterile matter, he planted it.

He planted it in a glass test-tube full of a clear, amber-coloured jelly. He set the planting in an incubator room under an airtight bell-jar. He then exhausted the air from the jar with a pump. All the requirements for the growth of tetanus microbes were now met. If a few microbes existed in the jelly, they would grow in twenty-four hours to great colonies.

In twenty-four hours, on his return to the incubator room, colonies of tetanus microbes were visible to the naked eye. They resembled, in the tube of jelly, a fir-tree—a pale, vertical line, with pale, horizontal lines branching out on every side.

On a platinum loop he drew forth a mass of microbes. He spread this mass on a glass slide, he stained it with a blue dye, and he placed it be-

neath his microscope. The lens revealed to him a dozen of the drumstick-shaped bacilli of tetanus.

No other microbes were revealed by the lens—he had, therefore, a pure culture. To test this culture he injected a small quantity of it into a guinea pig's hind leg. The leg, after two days, stiffened. The next day the opposite leg also stiffened. Then the muscles of the back, then the front legs, became stiff, and the guinea pig died in tetanic convulsions. Where the injection had been made, a colony of tetanic bacilli throve.

These bacilli he proceeded to cultivate. And in his incubator room, in the vacuum of his bell-jar, he soon had a great number of colonies growing in a great number of test-tubes.

Ford worked in a cleanliness beside which the most delicate food is foul. In a world full of microbes, with microbes thick in the air, thick on the floor, thick on walls and tables, he worked very swiftly with instruments and materials that, by actual microscopic test, were free of every vestige of germ life.

And while he worked on tetanus, Redmond worked on snake venom, Tyson on tuberculosis, and Wallace on malaria. There were a half-dozen other young men at the institute, one preparing serums, another analysing milk, a third photographing bacteria. They had each his laboratory, and,

under the veteran Barr, they worked steadily, patiently, cheerfully. In education and ability they were the pick of the youth of America. But they had abandoned all hope of wealth; their salaries were small; small, too, their hope of fame. They devoted their lives proudly and gladly to science. And in that great, clean building, in the heart of a quiet country, working cheerfully in their white dress without thought of money or distinction, they were a brotherhood of monks whose god was knowledge.

There were similar brotherhoods in Japan, France, England, Germany, in every civilised land. These brotherhoods had sprung up when the discovery of bacteria changed medicine from sheer guesswork to a science. Fired by that discovery, which they deemed the grandest in all history, animated by a love of knowledge as ardent and profound as the mediæval monk's love of God, they were glad, in institutions that resembled monasteries, to abandon the world and consecrate themselves to research.

The world only heard of them when they were persecuted—when the high-salaried anti-vivisectionists brought against them charges of wanton cruelty.

Ford rose at eight. He worked from nine till one. After lunch he rode or walked with two or

three companions, or perhaps he exercised in the open-air gymnasium. From four till seven he worked again. Sometimes, indeed, he worked far into the night. But his evenings, as a rule, were devoted to reading. He was a great reader. There were few things he loved more than a good book.

In a month, having got a multitude of colonies growing, he set about the preparation of an anti-tetanic serum. He was working in new fields, and hence he groped and stumbled. To a student coming ten years after him he would seem to have worked with bandaged eyes.

For his serum he first injected, in gradually increasing doses, dead bacilli into a guinea pig. After the pig was become immune to dead bacilli, he gave it injections of the far more toxic living bacilli. It resisted these as well, and he tested it for complete immunity.

But his test failed—failed not so much on the immunised pig as on the healthy one wherewith his work must be verified. Thus a small injection of living bacilli would sometimes in these tests kill a healthy pig, while again an enormous injection would have no effect whatever. Why?

A weary series of examinations showed that always, where an injection killed, the bacilli had multiplied; and always, where it had done no

harm, the bacilli, instead of multiplying, had been devoured by the white blood corpuscles. Why?

Here his work halted. With bandaged eyes he groped. Week after week, month after month, he did not advance a step.

The autumn passed, the winter passed, and the young man still toiled upon this question. And in France, Japan, England, Germany, an army of scientists toiled on it as well. Nor did they, in the hope of fame, toil jealously, hiding their gropings from one another. On the contrary, for one another's enlightenment, unselfishly to speed the question's solution, they published every smallest development as soon as it appeared.

Thus, regularly, day after day, week after week, Ford took tetanus microbes from the soil, cultivated them, and injected them into guinea pigs, striving to discover why it was that sometimes these microbes killed, while again they were themselves killed. He hoped, but he did not really expect, to make this discovery. For he knew the vastness of science. He knew that he might devote his life to the tetanus microbe, and yet leave nothing behind him but a mistaken theory at which posterity would smile.

XXII

BARBARA'S flat hung high in air, the topmost story of an enormous, cream-coloured hotel. Ford, from the window fronting the Park, looked down on trees that, with the grace of dancers, swayed languidly their plumes above green lawns dotted with tiny black figures, and above white driveways whereon tiny black carriages glided.

"It is splendid to live up so high," he said. "What floor is it? The eighteenth?"

"The nineteenth," she answered.

They had just returned from luncheon, and, seated before the fire, her knees crossed and her cheek upon her palm, the young girl still wore her huge and bizarre hat, while her sable stole, with its lining of ermine, still hung from her slim shoulders carelessly. Barbara had played her last part, and they were to be married in a fortnight.

"Won't you hate to give up the stage, dearest?"

"Oh, no, no!"

"There is no need to give it up if——"

"But I want to give it up."

"Well, success hasn't spoiled you," he said.

"'Success!' I had no success. Perhaps, if I could have played good parts . . . But Abercrombie's rubbish——"

"You redeemed his rubbish."

"And the beautiful plays there are in the world!" she cried. "But, you know, those plays aren't 'breezy,' they aren't 'wholesome,' they don't 'leave a good taste in the mouth.'"

The cold sneer on her girlish face made Ford laugh. He said, "Tell me about your farewell tour."

"No. Tell me," she rejoined, "about your work instead. Are you still working on tetanus?"

"Yes; I am still on tetanus."

"Why is it so important to find a cure? Is tetanus so dreadful?"

"Dreadful." He shook his head gravely. "Dreadful."

"Tell me about it. What is it like?"

"Well," he said, "it starts with a wound or an abrasion. A man, for example, falls and scrapes the skin from his knee. A little earth gets in the cut. There happen to be tetanus germs in the earth. They multiply in the man's blood. And he feels, three or four days after his accident, a slight

pain, a slight stiffness, like cramp, at the side of his jaw. That means death."

"Death?"

"Certain death. The stiffness increases. It spreads to his arms, legs and back. The pain grows horrible. He can't open his clenched teeth. The final stage soon comes, the stage where a touch, a noise, even a draught of air, bring on terrible spasms, and the man's body on the bed rises up, on heels and head, in a high arch."

"Is he unconscious then?" Barbara asked.

"No. His mind to the end is clear. But he is kept drugged. Sometimes, in his convulsions, his tongue gets between his teeth; he bites it. . . Oh, it is a good thing, let me tell you, when he dies."

"And isn't there any cure?"

"An antitetanic serum is the only cure. Sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it fails. For the most part it fails. We haven't yet, you see, learnt how to make it right. I have made, myself, four hundred kinds of serum. My '317' is the best."

"Has your '317' cured many cases?"

"It has cured a few light cases, cases with a long interval between the wound and the first cramp. The longer that interval, you know, the lighter the case. If it's an interval of a week or two, '317' will probably effect a cure. But if it's an interval of only a few days . . ."

Barbara frowned into the fire. "Isn't it dangerous," she asked, "to work among such germs?"

"No," he said; "no, there's no danger, if you're careful."

She looked up at him from her armchair. She said earnestly:

"It is noble work. I like to think of you doing such noble work." She paused. Her eyes, lifted to his, shone with a grave respect. Then she smiled and added, "But, all the same, after we're married, I think I'll make you give it up."

Moved a little, he said hastily:

"Oh, there's no real danger. Now tell me about your farewell tour."

"But I've got nothing to tell."

"You had some wonderful triumphs, I know that."

"It's true I was the guest of honour at a Philadelphia camphor ball."

"What on earth is a Philadelphia camphor ball?"

Smiling delicately, she replied:

"It's the annual subscription dance of the Philadelphia aristocrats. The Philadelphia aristocrats are so poor that they can only afford one dance a year, and all the rest of the time their evening clothes lie packed in camphor. So, naturally, when they gather in a stuffy hall, their dress gives off an odour——"

"Really?"

"No, not really," she admitted. "It's just an ill-natured Philadelphia joke. The smell of camphor is so faint you hardly notice it."

"In Chicago, I understand, the women strewed your path with flowers."

"Don't laugh," said Barbara. She frowned, and, without lifting her eyes from the fire, she resumed in a low voice:

"It was ugly, like a nightmare; and yet, somehow, it touched me. It touched me horribly. I can still see those grey-haired women, fat and round-shouldered. They ran before me, trying to be graceful; they kept turning and throwing handfuls of roses at my feet; some of them even danced. I felt ashamed for them—ashamed. But I felt sorry for them, too. You could hardly tell from their distorted faces whether they were smiling or crying."

"Hysteria," said he.

"Well, at any rate, hysteria means sincerity, doesn't it? Those ugly women were so sincere. Some of them had tears in their eyes."

"In honouring you," he mused, "they were honouring youth. They understood at last, too late, youth's beauty and joy. And they remembered wistfully their own youth that they had perhaps wasted."

He paused.

"But we all waste our youth," he said. "Did McWade continue to send you flowers?"

"Yes. At every first night in every city there was a big bouquet."

"I suppose you know he's getting frightfully rich?"

"I always thought Jerome would get rich. He has such energy, hasn't he?"

"A typical American business man. Indomitable energy, and a mind unscrupulous, coarse, and a little mean."

"Jerome's mind isn't mean."

"I think it is. In a bargain he'd take every unfair advantage."

"But Jerome wouldn't consider it unfair! Business is like war to him, and nothing is unfair, you know, in war."

"True." Ford frowned, then added gloomily, "How long would a man last if he played fair in a game where his opponents were all allowed to cheat? But some day there will be no inherited wealth. Then this cheating game of 'business' will disappear."

"No inherited wealth? But, if you had children——"

"What is worse for a young man than an inheritance of a million or two? What is better for

him than work? And for girls, too, work would be best. A mother tells her daughters that her one wish for them is a happy marriage. A girl's sole aim in life is to marry well. What a mean aim! But if she worked, if she cultivated her mind. . . For it's on ourselves, it's on no one else, that we must always rely for our life's happiness."

"But I am relying on you," said Barbara.

He began to pace the floor.

"You ought to marry McWade," he said.

"Jerome? Why?"

"Because he'd be faithful, he'd trust you implicitly. But I——"

He paused before the window.

"Devotion like McWade's is rare. He has been true to you since your first meeting. With his millions, with his fidelity, with the perfect freedom he'd give you. . . But I. . ."

"I don't love Jerome," said Barbara.

"'Love!'" he cried impatiently. "'Love——'"

But as he turned from the window, as his eyes rested once more upon her beauty, his mood changed.

"Forgive me," he said, in a low voice. "I know now that love is divine."

"Divine," she murmured, gazing into the flame. "Divine. Divine."

She smiled dreamily. She had an air of naïve happiness. It was like a little child.

And somehow he felt very sorry for her. How sad that a soul so delicate and fine should ever sink itself in a man's coarse soul.

"And you," he said, "love me! What can you—you—see in me?"

"What can you see in me?" said Barbara softly.

"But you—your beauty——"

"Well, you're not so very ugly yourself."

But he repeated earnestly:

"No, I can't understand it. Why should you—love me?"

"Ah, but why should you love me?" said the young girl.

And gazing at one another, admiring one another, they wondered, with the profound and beautiful humility of youth, through what misconception each had come to gain the other's love.

"You understand me so," said Barbara.

"And you understand me."

"Wherever I am," she said, "if something amusing or interesting happens, my first thought is to tell you."

With a sigh she rose.

"Your sympathy . . ." she said. And she went slowly to the balcony window. "You always un-

derstand me, always. It's so delightful, your sympathy . . . so rare. . ."

She looked forth over the bay. Her gown, cut with strange skill, caressed and moulded the contours of her slender figure. Her every movement was graceful. In her elegant attire she had the free, unconscious grace of a young animal.

"You make me very happy, Barbara."

The pure profile, delicate and proud, turned to welcome him as he advanced, and side by side they stood at the lofty window. The sun drenched the grey city with golden light. On the bay's blue floor sunbeams danced madly, like a myriad of shining insects. Ships moved, as small as toys, upon that vast, flat, coruscating splendour. Each ship drew religiously a black trail of smoke across the radiance of the October afternoon.

"I wish we were on one of those ships," she said.

"We will be soon," said he.

"Where shall we go?"

"We'll take the southern route. We'll slip from frost into May sunshine. Our first stop will be Gibraltar. At Gibraltar we'll ride in little yellow carriages up hills shaded by lemon-trees. Monkeys will peer down at us from the peaks, and Spanish girls will sell us fresh-plucked pomegranates."

"How jolly! Where, though, will we spend the winter?"

"On the Riviera. In my mother's white villa near Monte Carlo. It is on a high cliff; cinder-grey mountains rise behind it; but its gardens are gay with bees and flowers all winter long. Every day we'll lunch on the terrace. Our table will be set under a palm on an enormous terrace that looks out over the shining sea."

"And afterwards, our home, where will that be?"

"Wherever you wish."

"Our home," she murmured dreamily. "Our home . . . where we'll grow old . . . grow old together . . . with children, perhaps . . . grandchildren. . . Can you imagine me a grandmother?"

They smiled. It was absurd to think that they would ever grow old.

"Oh, how could you believe," she cried, "that marriage was ugly?"

Her reproachful eyes looked into his. Her beauty enveloped him in glittering light.

"Barbara . . . kiss me. . . Barbara. . ."

Laughing breathlessly, she turned to him with a tender violence, a soft and passionate grace.

XXIII

FORD, leaving his microscope, glanced at the card:

MILLICENT MORTIMER MILLER.

"Tell her I'll be down in a minute," he said.

And slipping off his white overall, he descended to the reception room.

"Good-morning, Dr. Ford."

"Good-morning, madam."

He regarded Millicent Mortimer Miller with a lively interest. She was thin and restless; she had copper-coloured hair and rather fine eyes; she was about forty-seven years of age. "Superbly sexed" —the phrase ran through his mind from one of her poems. "Superbly sexed." What, precisely, had Millicent Mortimer Miller meant when she wrote "superbly sexed?"

He smiled, but her first words caused his smile to fade.

"Here is an affidavit, doctor, that John Tomilson has made about the horrible atrocities inflicted on animals in this institute."

"Tomilson is a discharged employee. What did his affidavit cost you, madam?"

"What it cost is not the question. The question is, are these charges true?"

She handed him the statement. Sensational and crude, it had manifestly been composed by a *Dispatch* writer. Returning it, he shook his head.

"One long, malicious lie."

"But——"

"Scientists are not fiends," he interrupted. "Scientists, as a class, are above the average. They're men of imagination, sympathy. Why accuse them of inflicting wanton pain?"

"But——"

"Pain they do inflict, pain and death—like butchers, you know—for the benefit of mankind. Yes, they inflict an abundance of pain and death in the course of their experiments on animals for the cure of disease. And either they must experiment on animals, or they must experiment on men, or the progress of medicine must halt."

"In God's great scheme——"

"'God's great scheme?' Oh, let us stick to the point. The point is this: Man has the right to sacrifice animals for the good of the race. Man sacrifices himself for the race's good. Shall he hesitate, then, over a rabbit or a rat?"

"But he doesn't sacrifice himself, Dr. Ford. If you vivisectors would vivisect one another!"

"Lazear and Carroll and Agramonte, three American physicians, submitted their bodies to experiment for the cure of yellow fever. Lazear died, Carroll never fully recovered. But still further tests were needed; it was necessary to find out whether the yellow fever germ would pass through a filter; and some young American soldiers offered themselves. Two of the young soldiers died. . . And yellow fever was stamped out in Cuba. . . But is it not unfair to ask heroes to die when mice or guinea pigs can take their places?"

"Still——"

But he rose, flushed and angry, to end the interview. The "antivivisectionists" were either cranks or grafters, and this woman was a crank and grafter both. Let her stick to her erotics!

But the morning's fine, clear serenity was lost, and he resumed his work with a troubled mind. "Superbly sexed." What an ass she was! And a million people would read her attack to-morrow, and the State would probably withdraw its promise to aid Barr's splendid experiments in bovine tuberculosis, and all those long and costly tests on tubercular cattle, halted midway, would be lost.

In his anger gripping too tight the test-tube in his hand, Ford crushed the thin glass.

"My God!"

He stared at his palm. There were three cuts across it; they had not yet begun to bleed; their edges were smeared with glass splinters and an amber-coloured culture of tetanus bacilli.

Tearing the cuts open, he ran to the spigot and washed them. He disinfected them thoroughly.

"If the bacilli are dead. . . If they are only dead!"

He must see them in the microscope. He must know whether they were dead or not. Dead, they would be harmless. But living . . .

He hurried to his table. Bending over the broken tube, he took up a little of the culture in a platinum loop. His wounded hand hampered him, but he worked with desperate haste. Repeatedly, though, he seized the wrong vial, he ran to the wrong cabinet. The slide, almost finished, dropped and broke. He leapt to the cupboard for another slide, then doubled back, remembering that the box was on the table after all. And continually he trembled as with ague. Continually he seemed to be enduring some incredible, nightmare torture which the microscope would end.

But when the slide was ready at last, he hesitated to look at it.

"Life or death," he muttered.

And he began to pace the floor. Ugly thoughts buzzed like fat flies in his brain. He thought of tetanus convulsions, Millicent Mortimer Miller, death; though in the turmoil of his mind he did not really grasp those thoughts.

But suddenly the full horror of death stabbed him. He stopped short. His face contorted, his fists clenched, he cried with subdued violence:

"For me? Oh! Not for me!"

And he ran to the microscope for succour, he seated himself upon his stool, he peered down the tube. Then, with a heavy sigh, he bowed his head upon his breast.

.

He had seen live bacilli, shaped like drumsticks, moving slowly across the luminous field.

.

The young man, weak and faint, sat with his elbow on the table and his cheek on his palm, gazing from the window at the garden. The garden was serene. The sun shone on the goldfish pond. How beautiful . . . beautiful. . . Ah, just to sit like this, just to gaze like this out of a window on a garden drenched in autumn sunshine—who would ask more of life? But he—he was going to die!

"No!" he whispered. "No!"

Strength returned, hope returned. He leapt to his feet, and, under the illusion that his friends would end his torture, he ran down the long hall shouting.

His friends surrounded him. They were calm and grave and kind. And surrounded by that friendly, white-clad circle, he smiled apologetically; the quivering tension of his muscles relaxed.

Redmond, leading him upstairs, gave him an injection of his own "317."

"And now," said Redmond, "we'll take a drive. Barr will be here on our return."

But he complained:

"I'd rather walk—an all-day walk, as hard as I could do it. Then, to-night, I'd sleep, perhaps."

"No, old man, a drive will be better."

They drove for two hours, in a still sunshine, down quiet lanes, through woods of gold and scarlet that were like cathedrals in their dreamy splendour.

"Do you like novels, Ford?"

"Oh, yes; some novels."

"Then, this afternoon, we might have a little reading. What sort of novels do you like?"

Redmond talked; he saw to it that Ford listened and answered; and all through the ride it seemed to Ford that he was enduring an incredible, a

nightmare torture which would cease when he met Barr.

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"Ford," said Professor Barr, "you know better than any of us the virtues of '317.' But the next few days are going to try your nerves. You'll be calm, just as calm as you can; you'll keep your mind occupied, eh? Don't yield to any morbid desire for solitude. At night a sedative may be necessary."

"It worries me about Miss Gwynne."

"Yes, I know. You were to have been married in a few days."

"I don't suppose I ought to see her?"

"No."

"I must send her a message of some kind."

"I'll call at Miss Gwynne's this afternoon myself."

.

The day passed, passed with walks and books and argument, and not for a minute was he left to brood alone. The night, too, passed: a night of drugged sleep. But when he awoke in the morning, he imagined that he felt a slight stiffness at the side of the jaw. He knew that, even in the most virulent case of tetanus, this symptom could

not manifest itself so early. There, nevertheless, it was. Opening and closing his mouth, he deemed that the muscles worked stiffly.

Redmond entered, and he forgot his imaginary pain. He rose, he forced himself to eat a little breakfast, and then the carriage appeared, and the young men drove again till luncheon time.

With overcoats and rugs they spent the afternoon on the lawn by the fishpond in the sun. Redmond read aloud, and, to assure himself of Ford's attention, he argued on subjects brought up by his reading. Ford lay back in a deck-chair, replying in faint and weary tones to his friend's questions. It seemed to Ford that he was living in a black nightmare, a black nightmare of unreal torture, which would end in four days' time. If four days passed without the first symptom's appearance, then he might hope, perhaps, for a mild, a curable attack.

He thought of death. Had he ever really believed that he would die? Now and then, in a moment of solitude—lying awake at night, or walking in cold, bright weather by the sea—he had been suddenly struck by the thought that some day years hence, he, an old man, would lie dying; and in the horror of that thought he had writhed in indescribable anguish; he had shrugged his shoulders, threshed about with his arms; and thus he had

driven the thought away before it came quite home to him.

But now——

"I claim," said Redmond, "that a dog's affection is purely parasitic."

"You might as well claim that a wife's affection is purely parasitic."

"Well——"

But Ford's mind returned to death again. He thought of the Heaven of his childhood. Why, even in childhood, he had not believed in Heaven. What simian intelligences, then, were those that in maturity believed——

"Look here," said Redmond, "I want you to listen."

"All right, old man, I'll try. I'm awfully worried, though."

"Take a swallow of this."

He sipped the brown drug, a sense of peace stole over him. . .

But every morning, awaking from a long, sound sleep, he felt that pain and stiffness of the jaw. And as he lay rubbing his cheek, vivid pictures of tetanic convulsions rose before him. He saw men biting their tongues, he saw men whose arched bodies rested on head and heels alone. Terrified, he summoned Redmond. . .

The third day was the most comfortable since

his accident. There had been a consultation in the morning, and Professor Barr and Dr. Howard had shown themselves well pleased. Ford, after the consultation, beheld on all sides relieved and cheerful faces.

But in the evening of that comfortable third day he became restless. Though he retired later than usual, he could not sleep. A strange, vague horror possessed him. His narcotic was doubled, and, with a weary sigh, he glided into drugged unconsciousness.

He awoke. The October sunlight streamed into the room. The cold, pure air filled him with a sense of joy. Then, suddenly, he clapped his hand to his cheek; the serenity of his face changed to distorted anguish; tears filled his eyes.

"No hope," he whispered. "There's no hope."

And sitting erect, his hand pressed to his cheek, he rocked back and forth.

The pain, the stiffness—he really felt those symptoms now. And conscious that he was going to die after a few days of horrible and atrocious suffering, he pitied himself profoundly. He wept for his hard fate.

For him no more the beauty of the sunshine, the beauty of the moonlight, the beauty of the windy, tumbling sea. For him no more the beauty of girls' minds and faces, the beauty of Barbara, Bar-

bara in whom alone he had found perfection. For him the grave, the cold, black grave, with its worms.

He would never know now whether marriage was fine or vile. He would never know now whether old age was terrible or calm. Be the cup of life sweet or bitter, he had wanted to drain it to the dregs. . . But this was the end. It was all to end like this . . . his strength, his intelligence, his splendid thoughts, his hopes . . . all to end like this, as though he were a bug, an ant.

Alas, in the vastness of the universe, men were no more than ants. In the vastness of the universe men, infesting the earth, were no more than the tetanus bacilli that infested his own body.

The thought, somehow, strengthened him. He rang for his attendant. Death, after all, was nothing. It was this fear of death.

Well, they would keep him drugged. He must get himself thoroughly drugged at once. Hearing footsteps, he composed his countenance; he took his hand from his cheek. On Redmond's entry he contrived to smile.

But Redmond's cheery air vanished on the threshold.

"All right?" said Redmond, in a loud, strange voice.

Ford smiled disdainfully. . . These helpless fools. . . "It has begun," he said.

And he regarded Redmond disdainfully. But there was something in Redmond's face . . . something unsuspected, indescribably beautiful . . . that melted his disdain. He turned to the wall.

"Old man," said Redmond, stroking his shoulder, "it has kept off till the fourth day. That's good, you know."

"I feel," said Ford, "like a wounded rat. I want to crawl into some black hole . . . and brood. . ."

"Nonsense. Swallow this."

The drug soothed and stupefied his mind. But the pain in his jaw increased steadily. He kept trying to open his mouth. The pain then jumped like a toothache.

"Lockjaw," he mused. "Lockjaw. . ."

But, after all, he was half asleep.

"Drugged like this," he mused, "I don't really suffer."

.

In the evening he awoke with a clear and serene mind. Carr, the noted anæsthetist, sat beside him. There was an odour of chloroform in the air.

"Carr," he said, "where is Redmond?"

But Redmond, it seemed, was bending over him.

"Redmond, send for Barbara Gwynne, will you?"

"Yes; I'll go and get her at once."

While he awaited Barbara, he lay and regarded Carr thoughtfully. Carr, under his gaze, seemed embarrassed, whereat he smiled with sly amusement. He felt strangely remote from the troubled Carr; remote, superior, like a white explorer with a savage. And in a mood of condescending kindness he opened his lips to tell Carr a splendid and joyous secret, to tell him how easy it was to die, to tell him what a foolish, wretched mistake was all this fear of death. But the secret would be difficult to tell . . . it hurt his jaw to talk . . . and he was tired. . . So he contented himself with touching Carr's knee and whispering:

"Smooth the road well for me."

The door opened. Barbara, tall and slender in her black velvet gown, advanced with slow steps. She wore an ermine stole, and her hand, hanging at her side, was thrust into an ermine muff. A huge hat threw its soft shadow on her beautiful face.

"You have worn," he said, "the dress I like best."

And, as his attendants withdrew, he looked up at

her gaily. Was her cheek wet? No; for she was smiling.

"Get well," she said.

She stood over him. She enveloped him in the warm radiance of her young and virginal beauty. Strange! her beauty no longer thrilled him.

"And to-morrow," he said thoughtfully, "would have been our wedding-day."

With a sudden movement she put up her muff before her face. He heard a faint sigh. But, when she lowered the muff, she was still smiling.

"We must postpone our wedding a week or two," she said.

"Perhaps," he replied. "But I am going on a long journey."

"You'll be back," said Barbara, "soon."

"Perhaps. But it is a long journey . . . a horrible journey . . . through swamps writhing with reptiles. . ."

"But you'll return," said the young girl.

He smiled faintly. He shook his head. She bent over him, and he tried in vain to feel sorry for her.

"Ah, come back soon," she sighed.

But, in spite of himself, he shook his head obstinately, and there was something elfin and mocking in his smile.

"Ah, come back soon."
"Perhaps."

.

But he never came back. She saw him but once more alive. The room was darkened, and at his bedside sat the anæsthetist.

She advanced slowly in the dim light. The anæsthetist bent forward, a white cone of chloroform in his hand, watching the figure on the bed with the tense and breathless devotion of an antique slave. Now and then a kind of ripple passed over the figure, the anæsthetist applied deftly his chloroform cone, the ripple ceased.

Her heart bursting with grief and terror, Barbara looked at the unfortunate young man. He lay on his back in a rigid attitude. His head was strangely retroverted. His eyes were closed.

She kissed the cold and knotted brow.

A kind of shiver seized him. The head drew further back. The anæsthetist applied the chloroform cone. The body rose up in a frightful arch. . .

Barbara ran from the room with a cry of horror and rebellion.

XXIV

In the middle of a huge office full of clerks stood a kind of glass hutch, through the clear and shining walls whereof Jerome was visible. Jerome, bent over a desk, worked hard. But his eyes looked very tired.

At a table before the glass hutch Bill Stroud presided, a post Bill had held since the episode of the bomb.

The episode of the bomb had followed that wonderful cotton combination wherein so many small investors—carpenters, doctors, dressmakers, clergymen—lost their little all.

The bomb was a "protest." The bomb thrower, a frail youth, entered the huge office and advanced towards the rear room that Jerome then occupied. He balanced the bomb in his outstretched hand cautiously, and in a shrill voice he protested that, till laws were made to protect the honourable poor from rich thieves, force must protect them. So

saying, he drew back his arm as if to hurl the bomb, and he quickened to a trot his progress towards the door marked "Mr. McWade."

And from his path all Mr. McWade's most trusted advisers, all his most favoured aides, to say nothing of his clerks and bookkeepers, fled like the wind. At the exit they jammed. Their yells, as they climbed over one another to get out, made a horrible noise.

The amazed Jerome appeared. He saw the uplifted bomb. He saw his fleeing men. And he thought, face to face with death, of a strange word, a word he never used, the word loyalty.

Loyalty. . . If some one would steal up from the rear. . . But loyalty existed no longer.

Then Bill Stroud, the worthless drunkard, Bill whom he employed solely for old times' sake, Bill dropped his brush, he leapt from his ladder, he tore the bomb from the youth's thin hand, he hurled it through the window—bang! It exploded in Wall Street, killing only a policeman.

Since then the hutch of glass, since then Bill's post of guardian, since then, too, Jerome's gradual decline. For the "protest" had, to a certain slight extent, achieved its end. A small group of legislators had begun to clamour for laws that would indeed protect the honourable poor from the thefts of the rich, and these legislators, called

"demagogues" and "fomenters of class hatred," had temporarily convinced the poor that the word of a Wall Street financier was not the same thing as the word of an honest man. That, of course, was bad for business. That was the cause of Jerome's haggard eyes.

.

Barbara entered. A thrill ran through the clerks and bookkeepers, and Bill in his blue suit hastened to welcome the beautiful young actress.

"Good-morning, Bill."

"Good-morning, Miss Barbara. I certainly am glad to see you again."

"It is like old times, isn't it? I don't suppose you keep chickens any more?"

"No, ma'am; no more. Lambs is the only things that pay in Wall Street."

Jerome, as they approached his glass retreat, heard their voices, and lifted his weary head. Then, beaming with delight, he rose and hurried forth.

"This is a surprise!"

"Jerome," said Barbara, in her languid, gentle and cold voice, "you look tired."

"Yes, I haven't slept well for a month or two. It's nothing."

He led her into the hutch, he seated her in his

luxurious desk-chair, and, taking the other straight-backed chair himself, he said, eagerly and gladly:

"Now what can I do for you?"

She hesitated, gazing into the distance. Her hat, strangely graceful, set off the purity of her profile, and under the tilted hat-brim her heavy hair flowed in clear and lustrous waves.

"Jerome, do you still want to back me?"

He started. That his offer, refused a hundred times, should be accepted now! But, feigning a joyous enthusiasm, he cried:

"Of course I do!"

"Then," she said, "I think I'll let you."

"Good!" shouted the ruined man.

She slowly turned her eyes upon him. And bathed in her eyes' soft light, he forgot his tottering fortunes; he felt ineffably happy, ineffably pure and clean and good, as though he were a little boy again. Barbara, regarding without seeing him, said in a low voice:

"In the past it didn't matter what I played. I knew my parts were worthless; but I did my best in them; they seemed, somehow, to live, worthless as they were. But when I went back to the stage, I resolved to take my work seriously. How can I take it seriously, though, when it is trash? No, I must play good parts, or . . . or . . . I don't know what will become of me."

She twisted together her long white hands lying in her lap.

"Get your own theatre," said Jerome. "Engage your own company. Play anything you choose."

"If I could succeed. . . "

"Oh, you'll succeed. Why, Jake Abercrombie has grown rich off you."

"His new play, Jerome, is the last straw. I have had a good many maudlin parts, but the part of Sweet——"

"Sweet?"

"Sweet is the name of the heroine and the name of the play as well. 'Sweet!' She is a ragged slum dweller, but, oh, so beautiful and good! She is always praying. You first see her, in her long white nightgown, kneeling in silent prayer at her bedside in her little room. She believes in prayer, and she has reason to. Her prayers change a drunken and libertine old millionaire to a kind of city missionary. They change a burglar to a Salvation Army captain. They reform a wifebeater, an opium smoker and a financier—yes, a financier like you, Jerome—and in the last act they prevent a murderer from murdering her millionaire convert. Of course she marries her convert. And that's the play, Jerome—a foolish lie about the power of prayer. No, I can't stand it!"

The scorn in her voice amazed him. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes glittered angrily. Yet "Sweet" seemed a good play to him, a play with a good moral "uplift." He stammered:

"Of course the millionaire is too old for Sweet."

"He is Mr. Abercrombie's age," said Barbara. "Mr. Abercrombie's heroes are always his own age."

"Well, what theatre will you take? The Coronet?"

"Oh, no, Jerome; that is too big. I want to begin in a little theatre—the Cortlandt, perhaps."

"You don't want to begin in a small way!"

"Yes, I do."

"But what is the good of capital, then?"

"First I must see if I can fill a small theatre."

"But you're filling a big theatre now!"

"Yes, in 'The Queen of Divitia.' My new plays, though, will only appeal to the intelligent."

"Nonsense! Take the Coronet. I know you prefer it in your heart."

.

At first Mr. Abercrombie would not hear of Barbara's resignation. Then, when he realised that he must lose her, tears filled his large, dark eyes, and in an ugly scene he berated her for ingratitude.

The part of Sweet he transferred to Thaïs Ransome, a pretty girl of eighteen, and to Thaïs also he transferred Miss Hanch.

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Barbara chose for her first play "Hilda Muller." For with a god's power, it seemed to her, the stern old Russian playwright revealed in "Hilda Muller" all the strange beauty and mystery of girlhood.

She had no difficulty in forming her company. The actors and actresses she desired, the really good actors and actresses, were indeed so glad to appear in a play like "Hilda Muller" that they would have joined her company even at a sacrifice.

And the rehearsals were a joy. These young men and women had never shared in such rehearsals before. In the past they had always set up at their rehearsals an imaginary public, a public as crude and restless as a child of five or six years, and they had degraded their art to this public's level, had acted solely to please it, solely to catch and hold its wandering attention. They had capered and crowed before it, as a young father capers and crows to amuse his babe.

But now, now for the first time, they could act

to please themselves, they could act to please a public as intelligent as themselves; now, careless of all else, they could do their best, their very best. No wonder, then, the rehearsals, under Barbara's hand, grew with amazing speed into that firm and lovely form of which she dreamed.

The success of the rehearsals awed her. She was glad now that, taking Jerome's advice, she had leased the huge and expensive Coronet Theatre. And though in their advance notices the critics were inclined to sneer, some even accusing her of a desire to "elevate the stage," she approached the first night of "Hilda Muller" with almost perfect confidence.

But alas, from the first night, the critics and the public were alike indifferent to "Hilda Muller's" austere beauty.

Barbara overcame her disappointment quickly. She would not for an instant admit herself beaten. She said that, with a weapon like "Hilda Muller" to fight with, she could never be beaten. This temporary set-back was her own fault—she should have insisted on a small theatre—and she declared courageously that they must now shift to a small theatre at once. But to this shift Jerome would not consent.

Amid the mocking laughter of the critics, Barbara played "Hilda Muller" for eight weeks at the

Coronet to half-empty houses, while at the Abercrombie Colonial next door, spurred on by the critics' almost delirious praises, "Sweet" ran to record business. Her manager then drew heavily on Jerome, and "Hilda Muller" went on tour.

* * * * *

To Jerome that winter was a war, a war wherein he fought alone, the whole world against him.

Even Barbara seemed to be against him. Barbara, had she known, would have helped him. She would have helped him as he had helped her on the first night of "Vassa." But, now that she had accepted his backing, he could not tell her of his troubles, and hence, instead of helping him, she continually harassed him with demands for money.

His friends, the millionaires whom he met in board rooms and banquet halls, said earnestly that they would be glad to help him if they could; but the public, they pointed out, was still cautious, thanks to the demagogues and fomenters of class hatred; and meanwhile it seemed to Jerome that the millionaires were in secret trying to harm him.

He grew lean as the winter passed, and he began to suffer horribly from insomnia. He would go to bed dead tired, and, confident of sleeping well, he would turn off the light and settle down

upon his pillow with a sigh of content. But a breath of wind would rattle the pane. A little later a dog would bark. Then he would hear the vile cry of a cat.

And growing wider and wider awake, he would lie and listen intently in the dark; till at last the faintest sound, the faintest creak, would cause him to jump nearly out of his skin.

He would then abandon all hope of sleep, and a kind of delirium, not altogether unpleasant, would possess him. Thoughts strangely vivid, thoughts as vivid as dreams, would whirl and race in endless procession through his feverish mind. He would compose long and brilliant letters, conduct masterful interviews, his difficulties would be nearly conquered. But a drowsy languor would steal over him. Perhaps he was to get some sleep after all: the night was still young. And opening his eyes, he would see the cold, sad light of the dawn. That unexpected vision would rack him with horror and despair. Too late, too late for sleep, and with a groan he would ask himself where on earth he was to find the strength to face another day.

Jerome was in a bad way. His nerves of steel had at last yielded to the strain of what in Wall Street was called work. But his were steel nerves, and, if the strain were lightened, they would spring back elastically into place again.

Jerome was in a bad way. And yet—if he could weather this storm——

For his country's growth was so swift, so monstrous, that his enterprises, chosen, after all, with acumen, would, if left alone, soon cease to stagger under their load of over-capitalization. Pigmies to-day, crushed to the earth beneath their cruel loads, to-morrow his enterprises would be such vast giants that they would swing easily on their way with those same loads hidden in their pockets.

If he could weather this storm!

.

He rose, after a wretched night, to a day of utter lassitude. A poisonous fatigue made him sick and foul within and without. He cut his lip while shaving with his new safety razor, and at the office he found a telegram from Barbara's manager—"Please send eight thousand." He drew the money from certain funds that he had no right to touch.

Bill Stroud entered.

"Say, Mr. Jerome, what next?"

And with scornful and incredulous laughter Bill spread before him an afternoon paper that contained the first article about his tottering fortunes.

Bill's faith moved him. He said:

"Well, Bill, it's pretty nearly true, this yarn."

Bill started. Then he gave a heavy sigh.

"If you could think of a coup, Mr. Jerome."

Ah, that was it—if he could think of a coup. Coups were the life and soul of such plays as Bill and he and all New York frequented. Strangely transparent and weak, coups yet befooled the most astute, they subjugated the most powerful. If he could think of a coup!

"Bill," he said, "coups don't go in real life."

"Well, anyhow, you'll pull through, Mr. Jerome. I bank on that."

"Yes, I'll pull through."

And he rose resolutely. The crisis was now come, and from somewhere in his splendid constitution reserves of strength flowed in to meet the crisis.

"I must see Gaines," he said. "Look up the next train for Chicago."

For a week he fought. For a week he stormed the financial strongholds of Denver, Pittsburg, New York and Philadelphia. For a week, laying bare all his enterprises, he proved to millionaire after millionaire that his ruin would harm and his triumph would benefit the listener.

He had found a coup, after all. His coup was to ignore friendship, loyalty, every decent feeling,

and, relying solely on selfishness, to convince his listener—by any means, fair or foul, to convince him—that their interests were mutual, that, inevitably, they must sink or swim together.

There were strange stories of that week's campaign. There were stories of threats, blackmail, physical violence, even tears. But these stories, for all their mocking note, had in them a note of profound respect. For the end of the stories was triumphant.

The day he realised his triumph, the day the great Hodson's telegram of assent at last arrived, Jerome realised as well his weariness, and he rose and stalked forth from his glass retreat.

"Bill, I'm going home."

"You look kind of bad, Mr. Jerome. You've been overdoing it. Why don't you take a couple of days off?"

"I guess maybe I will, Bill, now that I've pulled through."

His glittering French limousine bore him swiftly and smoothly to his beautiful house. He would lie down awhile. Seeking his bedroom, he took off his coat and waistcoat, then slipped them on again. For he was too restless to lie down. He entered the library and began to pace the floor with quick steps.

He had weathered the storm

He was glad he had weathered the storm. Had he gone under, a number of irregularities would have been revealed . . . not thefts . . . certainly not intentional thefts . . . for he had known, when he utilised those funds, that he would be able to return them . . . and to-morrow, sure enough, he was going to return them. But, all the same, had he gone under, thousands of the provident poor would have lost their savings through him, and it would have been to all intents and purposes just as though he had entered and rifled the little houses of the poor at dead of night.

A footman brought in Robinson's card. He never saw journalists at his residence, but Robinson, one of the editors of the *Item*, had a certain importance.

"Send him up," he said.

Robinson entered. His air was sympathetic and uneasy. Of course he did not know that Jerome had pulled through.

"Mr. McWade," he stammered, "we are going to print a—a story about you to-morrow. I'd like you to confirm it or deny it."

"Well, what is your story?"

There was a slight pause. To Robinson, standing by the door, it occurred that Jerome's figure was herculean, brutally, disagreeably herculean. Robinson regarded the solid neck above the white

collar. He regarded the massive arms and shoulders under the soft cloth of the black coat. At last, clearing his throat, he said:

"Is it true, Mr. McWade, that you have swamped yourself by backing a beautiful young actress with whom you are infatuated?"

Jerome turned very red. He rose.

"What actress do you mean?"

"Miss Barb——"

But Robinson stepped back hurriedly. Jerome was advancing. His blue eyes glittered like steel in his red face. And he seemed, as he drew near, to stiffen and swell. Bigger and bigger he became, a colossus that towered over Robinson, and now this colossus put out its hand.

"Don't you lay your hands on me!"

But Jerome clutched Robinson by the shoulder. An incredible grip. Robinson felt himself being shaken to and fro like a thing of paper.

"Look here," said Jerome, shaking Robinson with one hand with a kind of calm violence, "I don't often let myself go. It's dangerous. But I want to tell you, if you print a line of that lie, I'll take you by the throat, like this, and kill you. Yes, by God, I'll kill you. Like this. I mean it."

"Don't!" gasped Robinson.

"Do you promise not to print a line?"

"Yes."

And Robinson departed in haste and silence, nervously settling his disordered tie.

The episode left Jerome calmer. He did not, truly, often let himself go. He thought it cowardly to let himself go; he thought it unfair. Nevertheless it was now and then very pleasant, yielding to a sudden storm of rage, to carry all before him by brute strength. And Jerome, smiling faintly over the memory of Robinson's departure, began to read the last annual report of the Hong Kong mission. The eight Hong Kong missionaries, it appeared, had absconded with the mission plate. . . .

* * * * *

A bell rang, and, behind his servant, Barbara entered.

"Barbara!"

Running to him silently, she took both his hands in hers. Her air, as she looked up into his eyes, moved him in the strangest way. She had never looked at him like that before, with that radiant and grave approval, that queer humility.

"Jerome, are you ill? I didn't know till yesterday you were in trouble. Why didn't you tell me? And here I've been drawing on you, draft after draft!"

"It's all right now," he said.

"Oh, have you pulled through?"

"Yes, I'm stronger than ever now."

"I am so glad."

She unfastened her long, grey, fur-lined travelling coat.

"But you should be acting in Dubuque to-night."

"Oh, I've given all that up."

"But I won't let you give it up. I'm stronger than ever now."

"I am so glad. When I saw the *Dispatch* yesterday, I disbanded the company, I took the night express. Why didn't you tell me? Why did you let me——"

"I knew all along I'd pull through."

"But you were too good. It wasn't right, Jerome."

"Barbara," he said, turning confusedly to the fire, "Barbara, I was glad to do—I'd do anything for you."

"I know you would."

She regarded him compassionately as he leaned, tall and herculean, against the mantel. His eyes looked tired, his face was thin. But he had a manly air, a strong, bold, resolute air, a soldier's air.

"I know you would, Jerome. And yet . . . And yet . . ."

She smiled a strange smile. She mused. Then, blushing a little, she faltered softly:

"I have been reading one of your old letters. Jerome, when I ran away from Cinnaminson, from the Cinnaminson gossips, and you wrote me that humble, that generous proposal . . . you thought . . . you thought I was bad, didn't you?"

He frowned. He desired to lie. But he had never lied to her.

"Yes," he said.

"I knew it!"

And she rose, she gave him both her hands again.

"I knew it! I knew it!" she repeated, with soft laughter.

"You see," he stammered, "I was sure that, whatever you did, there would be some justification for . . . You are, I mean, so honourable, you couldn't degrade . . . soil . . ."

"Thank you, Jerome."

She returned to her chair. The grey fur lapels of her coat were thrown back, and he could see her slim bosom rising and falling. She still regarded him with that queer humility, that approval radiant and grave.

"You have paid me," she said, "a great compliment, the greatest compliment, perhaps, the highest . . ."

"I don't see how."

She let her gaze rove over the silver grey

Velasquez, over the first editions in their morocco boxes.

"That doesn't lessen my compliment," she said. "But how tired you look! Why don't you go abroad a while?"

"I might, if you were going."

She mused, her eyes downcast. Then, with a faint flush, a faint smile, she answered:

"I'll go abroad with you, if you want me to, Jerome."

XXV

ETCHEPHERDIA, a Basque house, stood on a high and narrow cape, breasting the sea like a ship. Before it the windy plain of tumbling waters spread in clear greens and blues to the horizon. Past it on both sides great rollers swept eternally shoreward. The air upon its terraces was sweet and keen and salt.

Barbara, the evening of her entry, dined on Etchepherdia's topmost terrace behind a glass windscreen. The sun was setting as she took her place, the wild sea was flushed here and gilded there with sunset light, the mountains of Spain were pink and clear like vast coals of fire.

As she dined slowly, she now and then looked up from her book. Before her rolled a sea of rose and gold. To her right the beaches of France, with their white dunes and their green pine-woods, were bathed in an orange glitter. To her left the rocky coast of Spain was all pink, translucent, flaming.

The twilight turned blue. Two or three stars

came out. The butler brought lighted candles. An enormous moon rose slowly.

After dinner she paced the great terrace in the moonlight. The sound of the sea was like a deep harp note. The air was sweet and wild, as though she stood at the bow of a ship.

But in the sound of the sea there was something mournful, there was something mournful in the cold moonlight; and shivering a little, a little lonely, she went indoors. The spacious reception rooms all opened one upon the other, and she strolled down long bright vistas, admiring the pictures and the tapestries. Then she went upstairs to her own suite, a suite as delicate and pale as the inside of a shell, and she visited her bath-room of green marble, she visited her bedroom with its gilt bed panelled in wicker, she visited her dressing-room, where a fire of odorous cedar flamed, an arm-chair drawn before it, with a table and a reading-lamp.

She read till ten before the fire. Then she went out and leaned over the dressing-room balcony. The sea in the moonlight was like frosted silver.

"I'll get up at sunrise to-morrow," she mused. "I'll spend the whole day in the open air."

She slept well, and the next morning a little after six Marcelle brought in her breakfast. The golden light of the dawn flooded the room, and her great

window framed a wild sea whose foam was turned to gold.

Delicious on its tray was her breakfast of rich coffee, fresh butter and crisp rolls. Past her window, as she ate, rocked tiny fishing-boats. The Biarritz fishermen, early as it was, were up before her—tiny figures in the vast splendour of the sunrise pulling lustily at tiny oars.

She ran to her perfumed bath, and after her bath she dressed in a walking-suit of rough tweed, with brown boots, a trim cloth walking-hat, and brown gloves. Then, a book in her hand, she crossed the garden and descended, by a stairway cut in the rock, to the pale beach.

It was still hardly seven. The sweet air was cold. But there was warmth already in the sunshine, and she set out slowly over the soft, coarse sand beside the thundering sea.

The sea frightened her. Never had she dreamed of such a sea. The rollers, as they curved over to break, were three and four times the height of a man. The beach was like a mountainside for steepness, yet vast sheets of foam swept continually up its sharp incline with a strength and speed that were horrible. It seemed to Barbara that if one of those hissing sheets of foam but curled about her ankle, it would surely drag her down with it to death.

On and on she walked, a solitary figure in an immense and sunlit landscape shaken by the thunder of the surf. Now she climbed great dunes as white as salt. Now she threaded little clean groves of pines that emitted an odour delicate and stimulating. Here a small, sturdy vineyard, yielding the good *vin de sable,* faced the sea. Here fragrant carnations thrust themselves out of the sand. The gulls were her only company.

After luncheon, still unwearied, she set out again. But this time she walked inland, following hard white roads that wound through woods and fields. Now and then she met an ox-cart. The huge, cream-coloured oxen, swinging their Oriental trappings of blue and yellow and red, obeyed as intelligently as dogs the cries of the driver who stalked before them, carrying a great goad upright like a spear. Little brown birds darted to and fro in the blue sky, but if they once alighted in the fields, men, stretched on their stomachs behind barriers of reeds, caught them in great nets cleverly.

She walked home in the twilight, amid a sweet, thin, melancholy music, the Basque songs of the returning mountaineers. She was tired, but at the same time she was incredibly stimulated by the pure air she had breathed all day. And as she dined alone, as she sat before the fire after dinner

with a book, it seemed to her that her body had never felt so light and strong, her brain had never felt so powerful and clear. Laying her book upon her knee, she gazed into the flame. Never had she realised like this the joy of life. And so much of life still lay before her, there were so many sensations still to taste. . . She rose and went slowly to the huge mirror. She gazed at her reflection a long while. Yes, men's eyes told her the truth. She was as beautiful as ever, she was perhaps more beautiful than ever. . . But lonely. . . .

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Fascinated by Etchepherdia, she had leased the house for a year. Here, their tour ended, Jerome had left her. Here she would rest, after the disappointment of "Hilda Muller," until her desire for the stage revived again.

She would never go back to the stage save in plays of "Hilda Muller's" quality, plays beautiful and sincere. Ford's death had impressed indelibly upon her his own conception of the hideousness of life, but with Ford she believed that life's hideousness could be mitigated. By living honestly and fearlessly, by being true to one's own soul alone, life could be made almost happy. She, playing "Hilda Muller" to nearly empty houses, had been,

thanks to certain intelligent applause, almost happy.

But the stage's greatest triumphs did not, after all, promise her enough distraction from the hideousness of life; and laying down her book, she dreamed in the nocturnal silence of the marriage whereof she had been robbed.

She dreamed of a spacious and beautiful house upon a hilltop, a house full of joyous interests, with the fresh, frail voices of little children sounding through sunlit halls.

And overcome with loneliness and sorrow amid those great, silent, illuminated rooms, she took up her book again hurriedly, resolved not to cry.

.

Winter came on, winter with its wild, warm storms. For days on end warm winds howled incessantly. And the sea's fury passed all credence.

Barbara, reading by the fire, would look from her window at a sea turned altogether to white foam, a sea of white foam, eternally flinging gigantic white masses up into a low black sky.

Great flakes of foam rose like white birds on the wind and flew miles inland. The warm, wet, grey, tempestuous days were full of those white foam birds. And through the foam that lay in mounds

upon the beach children ran with wild laughter, disappearing altogether in its depths.

Once, as Barbara trudged in her rubber coat towards the Bar, the warm wind turned cold, the rain turned to hail, and struggling onward amid a rattle of hail-stones as big as marbles, she passed gull after gull stretched, dead or dying, on the sand. She counted a hundred or more: grey, bedraggled heaps of plumes on which the hail beat fiercely. As she bent over them, shocked and sorrowful, some moved their wings in a feeble effort to escape. Poor things! What had killed them? The wild weather?

A warm, wet, grey, tempestuous winter, fattening the green land, preparing it for a divine spring.

.

The spring came early. In the gayest sunshine, the mildest, sweetest air, the plane-trees put forth a few pale green leaves. The leaves increased. Soon they resembled a flight of green butterflies hanging amid brown boughs.

Then the pear-trees' gnarled and naked limbs burst into soft masses of snowy blossom, and under a sky ineffably blue and smiling the apple-trees and peach-trees swayed great pink and white bouquets.

Barbara Gwynne

From the blackberry hedges that bordered all the roads sprang pale and tiny flowers, changing the hedges to white mists. Each white road now ran between two white mists of delicate bloom.

Over the green fields spread splendid broideries of wild flowers—yellow primroses and buttercups, purple ragged robin and thyme, white daisies.

And in that great sunshine, in the smile of that pure, blue, transparent sky, amid white fruit-trees, banks of violets, fields glittering with wild flowers, every hen walked amongst a brood of yellow chicks. Every duck swam amongst yellow ducklings. Mares browsed in the vales with long-legged colts at their sides. Cows guarded calves in every meadow. Tiny white lambs, bleating excitedly, scurried to and fro among the sheep.

One long spring day Barbara walked far back into the mountains. The air was like wine. She lunched on a mossy bank spangled with anemones and violets. Far below the blue sea flashed and glittered.

After lunch she rested on a stone wall near a little white farmhouse. A hen, in the shadow of a plane-tree, was teaching her chicks to peck. On the hillside a half-dozen young lambs leapt and bounded amongst the flock. An old woman hurried excitedly down the road with a basket of ducklings that had just been hatched.

Barbara Gwynne

From the little white farmhouse came a young mother with a babe in her arms. The young mother was beautiful, a girl straight and robust. She seated herself on a bench under a tree, and from her seat she regarded Barbara steadily.

Her proud and contented eyes fixed on Barbara, she pressed her baby's cheek against her own, she kissed her baby's arms and neck, and all the while her clear gaze said to Barbara:

"There are many triumphs, triumphs of luxury, triumphs of fame, triumphs of love; but this is the only real triumph. Nothing counts beside this. Wealth and fame are nothing, and the kisses of a lover are but the prelude to these kisses."

The ascending road left the farmlands far behind, and Barbara now walked amid hills all yellow with gorse. The air, flowing over miles of fragrant gorse, had a faint scent of vanilla.

She entered an old Basque town. The tall, thin, dark Basques talked to one another in a guttural and sing-song language which resembled Chinese. Their ancient pelote court was built of granite, and about its rectangle ran two rows of granite seats, with patches of moss growing here and there on the old grey stone.

She returned amid the sweet and wistful music of Basque songs. On one side the sun was setting in the sea, and on the other side a moon larger

than the sun was rising behind an old spire. It was very beautiful, but she was lonely.

The pink and green and gold faded to the deep blue of twilight, and in the twilight a nightingale began to sing.

After dinner she could hardly read for the nightingale's singing. A pair of nightingales had built their nest in a sheltered corner of the garden. The music flooded the room—joyous music. She had never heard music so full of joy.

She turned off her reading-lamp. She drew her chair to the window. She gazed out at the garden, at the trees and flowers dreaming in the moonlight.

The nightingale sang on. What happiness in its song! A happiness that made her want to weep.

She thought of the young mother under the plane-tree caressing her baby. She remembered the mother's eyes as she kissed the baby's neck, as she tossed the smiling little creature up and down, as she kissed its pink, round arms.

On and on sang the nightingale. In the fragrance of the moonlit garden its heart seemed bursting with joy.

And Barbara dreamed in the moonlight, to the music of the nightingale, of babies' little faces always turned to their mothers, of babies' eyes always following their mothers, of babies' tiny outstretched

arms, their helpless and appealing little hands . . .

On and on she dreamed. . . Little clutching hands, little bodies soft and warm, smiling faces, following eyes . . .

The nightingale sang more loudly. The garden dreamed in the moonlight. And Barbara dreamed. Her dreams had all the passion and sweetness and despair of a young lover's.

Little, helpless, clutching hands . . . smiling faces . . . following eyes . . .

XXVI

JEROME, on the completion of the Lawless merger, had built his fourth house. Here, in regal magnificence, he lived alone—alone with twenty-six servants.

He no longer liked to be called a business man, having outgrown that title, as he had outgrown his three other houses. He now liked to be called a financier.

His energy, as a financier, was even greater than it had been as a simple business man. His intense and devouring energy interfered with his health. Hence he had to curb it somewhat.

There was something frightening about his energy. He would fall upon a piece of work as if that piece of work were his life's sole object, as if, unless he succeeded in it, he must die.

And he would toil night and day, week in and week out. And besides giving himself wholly, he would compel a host of other men as well to give

themselves wholly, setting everybody impossible tasks. Thus Brown must increase freight rates and freight carriage. Jones must lower the consumption of fuel and the time of trains. Robinson must cause the number of employees and accidents alike to decline.

He would be told that his requirements were impossible, but of impossibility he would never hear. What he desired must, must be achieved. And he would argue, storm, quote precedents, suggest ways and means, blazing with energy as with a flame. And the men, leaving his presence with the knowledge that they must either satisfy him or resign disgraced, would, to save their skins, work as they had never worked, strive as they had never striven, till at last, to their own astonishment, they would succeed. The impossible would be accomplished.

Then Jerome, having conquered, having conquered after months of toil, months of anxiety, months of disappointment, contention and despair, Jerome would heave a great sigh of relief, he would lean back in his desk-chair and smile, but instead of saying, "Now, at last, a rest," he would say, "Now, at last, I can get at——" And the next hour would see him enrapt heart and soul in a more desperate struggle than the one just ended.

But his energy, as he grew older, spoiled his sleep. Sometimes, after a day unusually tense and

exciting, he would toss till dawn. To curb his energy he turned, therefore, under Pat O'Rourke, to exercise.

Under O'Rourke he built a gymnasium on the top floor of his house, with an elaborate set of needle and shower baths and a great marble pool. Here, every morning, he boxed, wrestled and played hand-ball, concluding with a plunge in the pool's clear depths.

But O'Rourke preferred open-air exercise, and for every hour spent in the gymnasium Jerome spent two on horseback, on the links, or, in sweater and rubber-soled shoes, on long jogs over country roads. Thus his weight decreased. He became lean and hard and supple. Sun and wind changed his pallor to a ruddy brown.

He became, too, really elegant, thanks in part to his "house secretary," Lord Seymour's son. Jerome had always sought after elegance, but his standard had been wrong. Now, a correct standard having at last been achieved, his elegance left nothing to be desired.

Every morning at eight he took in bed a cup of coffee and a slice of toast. Then, having exercised and swum, he descended to his dressing-room, where Seymour awaited him with the house mail. While he ran over the house mail, declining this invitation and accepting that, his valet now shaved

him, now buttoned his crisp and delicate shirt, now drew the forms from his shining boots, now handed him his fresh, rich tie.

He read the papers and finished his private correspondence at breakfast. After breakfast the hall porter brought him carefully his well-ironed hat and lustrous overcoat, handed him stick and gloves, and, with profound reverence, ushered him forth into Fifth Avenue. There, instantly, he was saluted by the trim chauffeur at the wheel and by the trim footman at the door of his limousine. He entered the limousine, where another secretary with more mail awaited him, and all the way to Wall Street he read and answered letters.

In Wall Street every minute was occupied, every minute scheduled. At one he lunched with this partner or that. At two, for a quarter of an hour, he saw reporters. At four he departed, giving the rest of the afternoon to board meetings or to charity conventions. The evening was devoted to society.

For Jerome was in society. Mrs. Stuyvesant had taken him up. Mrs. Stuyvesant, the week after he helped her husband out of the copper muddle, gave in his honour one of her splendid dinners. Inasmuch as he had learned from Charles Seymour the ways of those smart London houses upon which Mrs. Stuyvesant and her friends modelled them-

selves reverently, his success at this dinner was satisfactory.

He was a good "catch," invitations showered on him, and he, from his beautiful house, showered invitations. His hospitality was extravagant. He set a new standard in *plats* and vintages. And in his superb dining-hall, while two hundred men and women ate and drank noisily at small tables under tents of roses, a star from the Opera sang sweet, unheeded music, a famous violinist played Beethoven amid loud laughter, a beautiful dancer danced to rows of backs.

XXVII

FROM her terrace, one radiant September morning, she saw his yacht on the blue horizon—a white speck under a plume of smoke. Bigger and bigger it grew. How white it was! Its brass cowls shone like gold in the sun.

The yacht loitered a while before the Bar, then glided into the narrow mouth of the Adour. In its progress Bayonneward it seemed to slide inland across the sands magically. It disappeared, at last, among the pines.

At noon, in trim blue, Bill Stroud arrived. Mr. Jerome had gone on to the Hôtel du Palais with his secretaries, and he would like to come to Etchepherdia, Bill said, for tea.

After luncheon she drove to Bayonne. On the way the postman handed her another letter from Abercrombie. Again Abercrombie begged her to return, offering better terms than ever; but Barbara read his offer with a frown.

She passed the yacht in the Bayonne harbour. How big it was! A half-dozen motor-cars stood before the gangway, and neat, blue-clad officers were leading *grandes dames* from Biarritz about the deck.

"Le milliardaire Américain!" she heard on all sides. And, as her carriage passed, she thought:

"How odd! I'm proud of knowing Jerome."

He arrived at Etchepherdia at four in a white touring-car, followed by a smaller car wherein sat three enormous and smooth-shaven men in black.

She welcomed him on the terrace. He advanced, laughing gaily, handsome in the sunshine. His thick, well-brushed hair was stirred a little by the wind, and in the golden brown of his tanned face his blue eyes beamed, his white teeth glittered.

"Barbara!" he said. The strong brown hand, as it clasped hers, trembled.

She withdrew her hand gently. "It's quite an honour to know you now, Jerome. But who are your three friends?"

The men in black had left their car, and one strode up and down before Etchepherdia, another stood at the gate, the third circled the court with slow steps.

"They are guards," he said apologetically. "I have to have them—the newspapers print so many lies about me."

As they conversed, they paced the terrace. The sun shone. An air wild and sweet blew from the sea. Past them great green rollers swept shoreward.

"Have you been to Cinnaminson lately, Jerome?"

"Yes, I was there last month."

"Are there any changes in Cinnaminson?"

"Bishop Harper has built a little country house on the Ridge."

"Is he a bishop now? How did he manage it?"

"He managed it with a campaign against the social evil. He and three young men did Tenth Street night after night all winter. Sixty raids followed. Bishop Harper's evidence was—But didn't you read it?"

"No, thank God!"

"I knew you wouldn't approve of Bishop Harper's campaign against the social evil," said Jerome hurriedly. "You always take the under dog's side, Barbara."

"Oh," she cried, "it was vile! To climb by means of those poor girls!"

A maid came forth with tea, and they seated themselves in the shelter of the glass wind-screen.

"You still take tea, Jerome?"

"Yes," he said. "Tea is a good stimulant. I can work like a lion after four cups of tea."

He laughed, radiant with happiness. He was very well dressed. His grey flannels were perfect. Perfect, too, his white shoes, his crisp shirt, his careless tie. Whence, though, came his aristocratic air? Was it that an aristocratic air was but an air of power, and Jerome's power exceeded many a king's?

He took a tiny *foie gras* sandwich.

"Mrs. Chew," he said, "has married a young railway brakeman."

"Oh, poor Elisha!"

"Poor Elisha came all the way from Palm Beach to stop the match. He and the brakeman had it out in the Chew dining-room. They smashed a lot of crockery, and Elisha lost a front tooth."

"Poor Elisha!" She laughed gently. "He was so pompous, it is hard to imagine him in a vulgar fight."

After their tea they lounged, facing one another, in great chairs of wicker.

"Jerome, Bill tells me you actually think of building again."

"Well, why not?" He glanced at her, and his face fell. "I don't know, though," he muttered.

In the silence, conscious of his gaze, she moved uneasily. Then her pale lids lifted. Her violet eyes, more liquid and more luminous than he had ever seen them, met his. And for a moment she

allowed him to gaze deep down into the clear depths of her beautiful eyes. . . Those clear and soft and shining depths. . . He bent forward. Through her transparent sleeves he saw the round and supple contours of her arms. And how beautiful were her hands! The long fingers were clasped about her knee. He bent nearer, he became conscious of a faint, exquisite perfume, but, with a sudden start, Barbara rose, and laughing breathlessly, with heightened colour, she walked to the balustrade of carved stone.

"Perhaps . . ." she was thinking, as, her elbows on the rail, she gazed forth over the blue and green expanse of sea. "I could, perhaps . . ."

"But what is the use of my building another house?" the gloomy and disappointed voice sounded behind her. "The house I live in now is too big for my loneliness."

She turned, a little astonished.

"Are you ever lonely, Jerome?"

"Am I ever lonely!"

"But not often?"

"I fight it," he said. "I get to work. All the same, it isn't very pleasant to look forward to a lonely old age. An old man, all alone, in a big house."

As they paced the enormous terrace Barbara said:

"What are you doing over here with so many secretaries, Jerome?"

"I'm forming a new combine. If I succeed it will be the biggest thing I've done yet. If I fail—— But I can't fail."

She faced him, leaning on the balustrade.

"What is the good of all your money?"

"I give a lot to charity."

"To charity?"

"Foreign missions, for example."

She laughed.

"Well, what charities are better?"

"There's medical research," she mused.

"Write me," he said eagerly, "a list of the charities you recommend."

Leaning against the balustrade, her back to the sea, she regarded him in silence. . . And again her violet eyes seemed to grow more liquid and more luminous. She allowed him again to gaze deep down into their soft, clear depths. Jerome, bathed in delicious violet light, whispered sadly:

"If you would marry me . . ."

But she shook her head. "Would you have me marry you without loving you?"

"Yes; for I couldn't love you any better if you did love me."

"Poor Jerome!"

"This money of mine . . . Think what you could do with it. Think of the good."

"Would you have me marry you for your money?"

"Yes."

She shook her head. But her smile was tender. Her soft eyes lingered in his.

"Yes; yes," he repeated desperately.

But she still shook her head.

XXVIII

"YESTERDAY I flew," said Barbara, "and to-day I'm going to see a bull fight."

The limousine hurried. In her elegant and bizarre toilet, a toilet suggestive somehow of the Orient, she crossed and uncrossed her knees. Her face was pale under the Eastern turban, and she kept biting her red lip nervously.

"You are more nervous," said he, "than when you flew. Why, you are more nervous than on the first night of 'Vassa.'"

"'Vassa!'" she cried, remembering Abercrombie's letter; and she continued, "Mr. Abercrombie wants me to come back to him, Jerome. He offers twice the old salary, and I may play anything I like at matinées."

All the gaiety vanished from his voice. "Do you think you'll go?"

"I don't know. The Grand Duke Paul takes

over Etchepherdia next month. I must do something."

The car stopped, and, surrounded by Jerome's tall guards, they ascended through crowds of well-dressed persons to their box.

Their lofty box commanded the whole thronged amphitheatre.

The ring, empty as yet, was gilded with floods of sunshine, and up from the ring rose in widening circles an immense multitude. Like a great garden the multitude moved and rustled, revealing here a snowy plume, there a bright gown, here a beautiful face. And over all spread the blue sky.

Barbara looked down at the bull ring, then she looked up at the sky; and the pure and serene and tender sky seemed to bend over the earth with a smile, seemed to offer mankind the revelation of some profound and precious secret.

Music struck up, and round the ring a gay little procession of young men clad in silk and velvet followed a gay little band.

But the procession ended almost as soon as it had begun. The band disappeared. The young men grouped themselves in careless attitudes here and there. A few horsemen with long pikes spurred their blindfolded steeds aimlessly this way and that. Moving, rustling, the multitude waited.

Then, across the ring, a great door slid open,

revealing a black maw, and out of that black maw a beautiful bull galloped forth into the sunshine.

The bull, small, sturdy, nimble, lashed its sides and kicked up its heels as it advanced. Amid such a plethora of enemies it hardly knew whom first to slay. But a youth ran towards it, waving a red cloak. It darted upon him. He halted, awaiting its onslaught with a smile: a gallant figure of a matador, clad in pale blue velvet embroidered with silver: and, when the bull was almost on him, he extended his cloak calmly, negligently, as a child extends a hoop for a trained dog to leap through.

And the bull, instead of goring the matador, gored the cloak. Its breath could be heard, hissing with effort, as it struck. A strange sound, that hissing breath, in the great sunshine, amid the vast, tense, silent multitude; and the bull, meeting no resistance, was lifted up on its hind legs. Then another red cloak caught its eye, it dashed across the arena, it struck vainly again.

A matador in yellow played with it a little while. He held his cloak now to the right, now to the left, now before him, now behind him, and the bull, as though trained, turned nimbly without fail this way and that to butt the scarlet cloth.

The great throng laughed and applauded.

"Why, he seems no more dangerous," said Barbara, "than a trick animal."

But a picador advanced on his blindfolded horse and pricked the bull with his long pike.

"Ah, he is dangerous enough," she sighed.

For now the bull's head, thrust beneath the horse's breast, was lifting it up, up. The rider fell to the ground. The impaled horse, erect, brandished its forelegs in the air helplessly. Then it was let down, and the bull, hurriedly shaking its horns free, sped after another red cloak. But Barbara, pale, with tragical eyes, watched the poor horse.

It stood motionless in the sunshine, its feet planted squarely, and it seemed to pay no heed to the red stream which gushed from its breast on to the yellow sand.

"But," said Barbara, "but——"

And a strange excitement seized her. She had expected to be disgusted, but she was moved, instead, like one who witnesses a tragedy. This bull fight was indeed a tragedy wherein even death itself was real.

"But that horse. . . It will soon die."

The horse, motionless, seemed to dream. The red stream gushed with incredible abundance from its breast. And amid the glare and heat and noise it stood dying in the tranquil attitude of a horse that stands in the shadow of an oak in a quiet pasture.

"Oh," she said, "how strange! To see a huge creature like that die!"

Suddenly the horse fell.

"I don't like it," said Jerome.

"Don't you like it?" she panted. "I think it is fascinating. It is hideously fascinating. I understand now the hideous fascination of the Roman games. To see men kill and be killed. . . Everything would appear tame and trivial after that."

A youth in pale blue ran into the ring. He held in either hand a dart hung with roses. Laughing, he followed the bull about. At last he caught its eye, and it lowered its head and charged. He stood directly in its path, he laughed gaily and cruelly, a dart extended in each hand, his pose affectedly graceful.

The bull thundered on him. He waited, motionless, his white teeth gleaming, his eyes dancing with laughter. Nor did he move a muscle until the bull's dreadful horns were within a few feet of his loins. Then, like lightning, he leaned over those dreadful horns, he planted his two darts side by side between the bull's shoulders, and he resumed at once his motionless and gay and graceful pose—for the bull, stung with pain, had straightway halted in its headlong course, and writhing and twisting, leaping high in air like a bucking broncho, it tried in vain to dislodge the banderillero's rose-hung darts.

But another banderillero advanced. It charged him, and he, too, planted in its back his flower-decked banderilles. Then a picador pricked it, and it slew another horse. Then a half-dozen matadors tormented it with their red cloaks.

But the bull was getting tired.

"How tired he is," said Barbara. "He has frittered away all his strength. He has accomplished nothing. And now——"

A swordsman appeared. He carried a cloak in one hand and in the other a long sword. The bull stood in the sun-drenched ring, tired, hopeless, but still facing its foes with a courage sullen and admirable.

The swordsman advanced calmly. It turned to meet him. With lowered head it pawed the sand. Planted between its shoulders, a half-dozen darts rose and fell with every movement.

The swordsman extended his red cloak. The bull butted. And, as it did so, the sword was buried behind its horns.

The bull, unmindful of its wound, faced its destroyer. He watched it, smiling. And it began to cough. It coughed and coughed. Then, suddenly, as though a spring had been touched, it gave a great start and fell.

"Dead," said Barbara. "Dead."

The multitude applauded. Four mules, harnessed

abreast, dragged off the bull at a gay, quick trot. It slid upon its side over the sand behind them, amid a jingle of bells, one sturdy leg stuck up in the air stiffly.

"To think . . ." she said. "A little while ago so strong and indomitable . . . and now dragged ignominiously off, dead, with nothing accomplished . . . It's like men's lives."

Another bull dashed into the ring. It had a conquering air. It charged everything. Its strength seemed inexhaustible.

"But it will soon be dead," she mused.

And in her strange excitement she compared a bull fight with the life of man. The bull was man; the picadors and banderilleros were man's vices and temptations; the swordsman was death. Death none could escape. But vices and temptations and weaknesses might well be escaped. Life's splendid energy, instead of being dissipated, might be devoted to some one achievement. Something might be accomplished before the swordsman came.

A second matador faced the tired and sullen bull. But he was not very skilful, that youth. Time after time he thrust in his sword nearly to the hilt, plucked it forth bright red, then took fresh aim and thrust again. The bull faced him always, accepting with an indomitable air those fearful wounds.

Barbara looked up from the tragedy of the bull ring to the serene sky. The sky was blue, a pure and tender and smiling blue. . . Down in the ring that horror . . . and up in the sky that serene and gentle beauty. . . Why would not man look up and learn the secret of the sky?

.

A bull, beside itself, attacked a dead horse that lay in a corner. The horse's head, as it was knocked about, lolled strangely; the neck looked incredibly long.

.

Her excitement increased. She seemed almost to have the key to life's sorry mystery.

Death none can escape, but the vices and weaknesses of life are naught to him who devotes himself, like Ford and like Jerome, to a single purpose.

And he who devotes his life to a single purpose, whether that purpose be noble like Ford's or ignoble like Jerome's, has a dignity that others lack.

Dignity . . . It was not much, perhaps. But how few lives possessed it!

Jerome's aim had been to grow rich, and he had succeeded. But his life had had another aim, and

this he had pursued with nobler means, with humility, with delicate kindness, with an invincible and touching faith. In this other aim was he to fail?

She bit her lip, she coloured. Does a woman ever give herself without love? Ah, yes, she often gives herself without love. She gives herself compassionately, as she might hold water in the hollow of her hands to a stricken wayfarer's parched lips.

She glanced at him compassionately. How strong he was! And she remembered her dreams. . . No, they must neither of them fail.

She remembered her life. She remembered Cinnaminson and the gossips. She remembered Chew, Chew's successors, "Vassa" and the critics' praises, "Hilda Muller" and the critics' sneers. And she remembered Abercrombie's letter, offering her all that life again. It seemed vain and empty to her now beside her dreams.

Yes, she, too, had frittered away her life. But she was still young. There was still time. They would neither of them fail.

* * * * *

A half-dozen horses lay here and there at the side of the ring. A black and white bull, surrounded by small, glittering, gesticulating figures, pawed the sand in rage, exhaustion and despair.

The flower-hung darts stuck in its flesh rose and fell. And blood, like a red mantle, draped its shoulders.

The bull, looking mournfully on its bright tormentors, bellowed.

The multitude laughed.

The bull bellowed again. In that mournful and tragic sound was all the despair of the man who perceives that old age has overtaken him, that he has achieved nothing, that his life has been wasted.

The multitude roared with laughter, but Barbara, beautiful in her Eastern dress, lifted her soft eyes to the sky.

Those luminous depths of blue. . . Those pure, serene and tender depths of blue. . . The sky bent over the earth with a divine smile, offering its secret through the ages. . .

If man would but look up. . .

THE END

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FROM THRONE AND COUNTRY.

"One of these days I am going to be the pioneer of a new profession. I shall call myself 'The Library Doctor,' and my business will be to prescribe the right books for you to read. I shall first feel your pulse, demand to inspect your tongue, make solicitous inquiries about your liver and appetite, and perform all the pantomime of Harley Street. It will be necessary, of course, to have charts. I see great possibilities here. Perhaps you need more sugar: I should prescribe a course of Mr. Maurice Hewlett's 'The Garden of Renny,' the later works of E. Temple Thurston, and Laurence Sterne in homœopathic doses. Or it may be you need bromides, and opium to soothe you: what better medicine than a dose of E. V. Lucas or the 'Q' mixture? You are slothful, and complacent, and require gentle irritation—I hastily order the library to supply you with:—Marie Corelli, 3 vols.; William Le Queux, 1 vol.; Charles Garvice, ½ vol.

"You begin, I hope, to see the infinite possibilities of my plan. Do you feel the need of a nerve tonic? Kipling, Joseph Conrad are for you; are you perfectly normal, with heart beats and pulse beats regular, sleeping and eating with the unthinking sameness of the well-ordered life? My chart tells me that only a slight fillip is required—shall we say Anthony Hope, Robert Hichens, and a few doses of the best romantic writers, to be taken as required, and during meals?

"But there comes a time when you may be well physically, and yet ill at ease within yourself, when you feel that all books that do not treat of the actualities of life fail to hold your interest; when you cannot attune your mind either to romance or idealism, and your soul cries for a book that is real, that reflects something of the life you have lived yourself. I prescribe the novels of H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, and sometimes the meaner medicine of their followers—and I prescribe also a remarkable book I have just read called **Life.**

"A bold title!

"What manner of writer is this who has the hardihood to label two hundred and eighty-three pages of print with one of the three greatest words in the world? **Life, Love and Death**

—they have been the themes of a million books through the dead centuries, and yet here is one book that arrogates to itself the all-sweeping title of Life. Its author is Mr. W. B. Trites, whose former book, 'John Cave,' I know only by rumour, and by the extracts from press-notices which face the title page of this book. And having read Life, I am ready to believe the critics who acclaim Mr. Trites as a genius. It is curiously Russian in treatment and method, even to the light of hope and endeavour that shines persistently through the grey clouds of pessimism.

"The story passes chiefly in New York and an American town Cinnaminson—which is as petty and gossipy as the famous Barbie of the 'House with the Green Shutters.' Here is Jerome McWade, a grocer's assistant, making money as well by chicken farming, and suddenly seeing the vision of a fortune, when a customer comes in to buy beeswax in order to make a face cream.

"That is the foundation of Jerome's fortune. It is 'Tono-Bungay' over again—he opens beauty parlours first here, and then everywhere; he schemes, and cheats, and has only one interest in life—the making of money.

"He is the type of the American multi-millionaire drawn remarkably, from his mean start to his meaner zenith. What is there truer than the following of the 'multis' as a class?

"'They were horribly vain. Not their daughters' vanity but their own it was, that continually drove their daughters to contract with noblemen marriages tragic and vile. . . And they were as sensitive as flowers. When, having broken this law or that, exposure came, with the certainty of arrest and gaol, they collapsed on the instant. They took immediately to their beds. Shame and fright consumed them like a fire. Surrounded by their families, they soon die. . . Wonderful men! Their incomparable energy might have changed this ugly and wretched world to a happy garden. But they wasted all that energy in gambling, lying, cheating and stealing.'

"The contrast to McWade is Ford the doctor, who lives his life in the cloistered calm of the laboratory searching for the germs of disease to cure mankind. And, between these two, there is the girl Barbara Gwynne, a shop assistant who becomes an actress as great as Bernhardt, striving to create, out of the artificiality of her life, the greatness of art which the world will not have.

"Those are the three protagonists in the book. You must read how they work out their destinies. They symbolise material man, and ideal man, and human woman with the eternal conflict and doubt in her soul of right and wrong.

"This is a noble book, because, though it touches the horror of death, and the ugliness of things, it uplifts with the

pure vein of hope that runs through it. There is a passage where Barbara, walking by the shore, perceives hundreds of grey bedraggled gulls killed by the storm.

> "As she bent over them, shocked and sorrowful, some moved their wings in a feeble effort to escape. Poor things! What had killed them? The wild weather? A warm, wet, grey, tempestuous winter, fattening the green land, preparing it for a divine spring.
>
> "And that is life! Out of death—life; out of evil—good; out of suffering—peace."

Mr. ANDREW BEDE in a page review in *Throne and Country.*

"A new style in literature."—*New Age.*

"A writer of great power and originality, gifted with the rare power of forcing home as reality what before has seemed transiency and illusion."—*Morning Post.*

FROM T.P.'s WEEKLY.

"Mr. W. B. Trites, whose first novel, 'John Cave,' got a good deal of attention from critics because of its conscientiousness of workmanship and its sincerity of purpose, makes his second essay in fiction with **Life.**

"The book is profoundly interesting, and grows in strength with every page; numerous characters come and go, but no matter how short their time upon the stage, we get to know them with extraordinary vividness. Barbara Gwynne is the heroine of **Life.** She is a beautiful girl, an orphan living in a small town with an old maid; she works in Smollett's large drapery store, to which she goes and comes every day by train. Barbara in her journeys, we are told, glanced neither to the right nor to the left.

> "For if her eyes, shining with the soft and tender gaiety of youth, were ever permitted to wander, they were sure to encounter a man's eyes; and this man might be a millionaire in a motor car, he might be a labourer digging in a ditch, but at any rate his eyes would look deep into hers in an appeal at once so humble and so daring that it would trouble her strangely.

"Naturally a girl whose eyes had such magnetic powers could not escape the censure of the gossips of Cinnaminson!

Then she had men friends. How could it be otherwise since she stood behind the men's counters of the stores?

"When a man shopped at Smollett's the prettiest girls surrounded him. They smiled up in his eyes, they held his hand in fitting a glove, to measure him for a collar they actually put soft, light arms about his neck.

"It is to be hoped, for self-preservation's sake, that American wives take care to buy their husbands' collars. However, gossip drove Barbara from her home, and she went to New York. There her career was that of all beautiful heroines in novels—she went to the usual theatrical manager and had straight away a 'success of temperament.' The shrewd Mr. Abercrombie engaged her there and then, and before a year was out 'she became a personage. The best shops insisted upon selling her the smartest gowns on credit.' Henceforth there was no looking back for Barbara!

"But this hackneyed story of the insignificant shop-girl suddenly taking the theatrical world by storm need not be dwelt upon or taken over-critically. Barbara is merely a pivot round which swings all sorts and conditions of people. Foremost and smartest among them is Mr. Jerome S. McWade, the triumph of the book. Studies of the self-made millionaire are always interesting; but I do not remember one quite so ruthless, so vivid, and so fascinating as Jerome. He also starts from Cinnaminson as 'grocery clerk' in a little shop. We first meet him in the spare minutes of a very busy June morning examining the cash register, 'a new contrivance that he believed could be outwitted.' Into the grocery store came Mrs. Woodford to buy the constituents for the making of a complexion cream. Jerome got the recipe, started experimenting, and was soon manufacturing and selling the cream on his own. His next venture was a beauty shop in New York, of which he made Mrs. Woodford the manageress. This poor lady, having given the original recipe, expected a partnership, but Jerome explained to her that as she had no money to put into the business her proposal was preposterous. The 'beauty' business flourished, and in many pages we see 'Life' through the eyes of the specialist who preys on the ever-present desire of woman for youth and beauty. Skinfoods and tinctures, and washes and powders, with all the accompanying paraphernalia of massage and vibration and kneading, soon brought the enterprising Jerome wealth. With cold analysis we are introduced to his methods. Self first, and everybody else second, is his motto, while work early and late backs it up. He is neither a tyrant or a nigger-driver; he does a good turn if it will not injure his business, and does not begrudge to pay well for the right kind of people.

"One example will show how well Mr. Trites handles this subject of the successful man. Mrs. Woodford had helped in the building up of the business; moreover, she had faith in its powers. She was thirty-seven, but in the 'treatments' she had found the Fountain of Youth. On a day she was feeling particularly confident as to her good looks she had an interview with her employer.

> "Jerome S. McWade brooded at his desk of yellow oak. On her entrance he scanned her critically. His bright eyes lingered on her face. With a thrill of pleasure he thought that he, too, marvelled at the look of youth nd freshness that had returned to her.
>
> "'Mrs. Woodford,' he said, 'there is a little matter I want to speak to you about.'
>
> "'Yes?'
>
> "'You see,'—his air was nervous,—'our success depends on our convincing people that we make them look young again—so I think it would be better if Miss Churchill managed the parlour hereafter. You—you will devote yourself to—to executive work in the inner office.'
>
> "He looked at her with an awkward and obstinate smile. Her over-red lips, he noted, were twitching.
>
> "'You want me,' she said, 'to keep out of sight?'
>
> "'Well, yes.'

"But later, when Mrs. Woodford tried her own wings in business and fell, Jerome helped her up again. Apart from money-making, Jerome has one other purpose in life—he loves Barbara. The story of his wooing is interwoven with his rise to millions, and hers to fame.

"And the end? That is held to the very last page; whether it is true to life or not each reader must decide for himself or herself. The author's sympathy seems to be with the money-maker right through, or rather with the man who devotes himself to a single purpose. 'He who devotes himself to a single purpose, whether that purpose be noble, like Ford's, or ignoble, like Jerome's, has a dignity that others lack.' We take leave of Jerome travelling with a retinue of servants—we see him, in his clothes, his manners, and his style of living, the complete aristocrat. The description of the spending of his day is a delight. From his having eight o'clock coffee and toast in bed and his valet buttoning his 'crisp and delicate shirt,' to his evening dinner party of two hundred guests, who ate and drank noisily to the accompaniment of Beethoven played by a famous violinist, Jerome is superb. Yet, with all the care lavished upon him, we fail to like him—he remains in spite of all that money and clothes can do the 'grocery clerk' on the make. So many novelists to-day glorify money and the

money-maker that an anti-materialist literary cycle is due. Life can be recommended as an interesting, vital, and painstaking novel making one look forward with eagerness for further books from Mr. Trites's pen."

N.H.W. in a page review in *T.P.'s Weekly.*

"A truly remarkable novel, by a new author . . . blent of irony and sheer beauty, and written by one who is unequivocally a brilliant artist."—*Music.*

"A powerful novel, a remarkable, strong and realistic picture of its subject."—*Morning Leader.*

FROM THE BIRMINGHAM POST.

"Mr. Trites so far has only given one book to the world, 'John Cave,' but it was generally admitted that he had made an excellent beginning. After a substantial interval he has produced the story which he calls **Life.** The title is in itself a challenge, for life is vast, profound, and complex, and can hardly be depicted within the compass of a six-shilling novel. We readily admit that most of the people to whom Mr. Trites introduces us were chiefly occupied in 'seeing life,' as the phrase goes, and a sordid, vulgar, lecherous form of life, too. But the author of **Life** has the creative power to make some at least of his characters live. Jerome S. McWade, the grocery clerk of Cinnaminson, an American provincial town, displays early in the story the acquisitive instinct which leads him to run a boom in 'beauty parlours' and 'youth-renewing' charlatanry to the highest pinnacle of fame, which in America is the stand occupied by the man who bosses the markets and rigs the Napoleonic deals in finance. He is in love with Barbara Gwynne, a surpassingly beautiful and circumspect damsel, who earns eight dollars a week in a dry goods store uptown selling neckties to the dudes. Jerome's charms are for the time being eclipsed by the grosser glitter of Elisha Chew, who has money to burn on dinners and trips to Island Park, which savours of Coney Island. But Elisha one night over-reaches himself in an attempt to entrap Barbara to her undoing, and reveals himself to her as the atrocious young cad he is. Taunted by her neighbours and friends, the sensitive and ashamed girl resolves to flee, but young Ford, a millionaire—**Life** throbs with millionaires!—who has studied medicine, and is now pursuing bacterial research and serum-therapy, counsels her to go to

New York, and become an actress. So she quits the necktie counter and goes West.

"As a matter of course, Barbara turns out to be a histrionic genius, and captivates a great entrepreneur, who writes for her a play called 'Vassa'—'Carmen with the wickedness left out.' Equally of course, she succeeds, and becomes the rage of the town. Jerome, now immensely rich—let it be said Jerome is a real good fellow—and Ford are rivals for her affections. The student's wooing is diversified with disquisitions on trypanosomes, the microbes of sleeping sickness, and descriptions of the horrors of death from tetanus, the antitoxin of which he is trying to discover. This, we are to assume, is an episode of real 'Life.' Barbara is pledged to marry Ford, and readers will anticipate the sequel. He breaks a tube of tetanus culture in his hand, the bacilli enter the wound, and in a passage of peculiar horror Barbara is shown rushing from his bedside, before the chloroform cone puts an end to his agonies. Jerome alone is left. In her distraction Barbara returns to the stage, financed by her admirer. Her enterprise fails, and Jerome narrowly escapes ruin in a market slump. But the Napoleon of finance rigs the market for a fresh triumph, and the scene changes to the Basque country, where Barbara rests for a year. By and by comes Jerome in his magnificent yacht, still the devout lover, and so lifelike is the story that the two go together to a San Sebastian bullfight, where in the intervals of a lurid and gruesome description of the tortures of the bulls and the horses we are permitted to witness the climax of their wooing. Barbara Gwynne is a true specimen of womanhood, and Jerome's complex and very American personality is vividly and convincingly conveyed, for Mr. Trites is an artist, and has written a notable book. But if the whirl of carnality, of extravagance, of selfishness and vanity which he describes be 'Life' as seen in America—there can be little doubt that it is—we must turn aside from it with a sigh of lamentation."

Birmingham Daily Post.



"A remarkable novel, strongly written, with marked individuality of style."—*Evening Times.*

"Mr. W. B. Trites has written a book which, although eminently American, is extremely French. It might have come from the pen of Maupassant. One very remarkable characteristic in this author's work is his extraordinary versatility. He knows how to draw the lights and shades so finely that the figures stand out absolutely lifelike."

Bristol Times and Mirror.

"A fascinating story told in a style suggestive of some of the great French writers."—*Northern Echo* (Darlington).

"Extraordinarily French in all its spirit, its style, its essence. . . . It reads like life itself, and justifies the title."
—*The Observer.*

"Mr. Trites's 'John Cave' was so remarkable a first novel that one approaches the present volume expectantly. Nor is expectation disappointed. Life is a thoroughly capable piece of work. It is biting; occasionally it touches unpleasant things; the author displays a weakness for coarse, lurid words; but the book has a message. Life is shown in two aspects—with and without a definite aim. Illustrating the latter are such characters as Elisha Chew, the millionaire, whose gross and unworthy treatment of Barbara is of a piece with his moral and social degeneracy. The former finds exposition in Jerome McWade and Dr. Ford, the one working for himself, the other for humanity. Woman is loyally presented in the lovely Barbara Gwynne, whose evolution from shop girl to dramatic star is one of the happiest features of the story. The psychology of her love for Ford and of her effect upon him is supremely well worked out. His scientific work had taught this man restraint. It had engendered a cynical attitude. But the lure of passion was ever before his eyes. Love co-related these warring tendencies, disproving cynicism and revealing happiness as a perpetual state of giving, wherein restraint is an act of devotion, passion of worship. The descriptions of the beauty parlour and the scientific laboratory are wonderfully realistic; the author has been at great pains to collect and verify precise information regarding the production of anti-toxins and sera. . . . The final note of the book—inspired by the tranquil, sunlit sky above the bull-ring—is significant—'if man would but look up.'"—*Glasgow Herald.*

"Vivid and pulsating life."—*Athenæum.*

FROM THE SHEFFIELD TELEGRAPH.

"I have so often inveighed against false realists that it is perhaps incumbent on me to explain what a real realist is. Better than any explanation of mine, however, would be the careful study of three books I am going to discuss this week. In outlook upon life, in treatment and in style, they are as

different from one another as may be. They are only similar in their typical modernity, and their resolute determination from different points of view to see life steadily and to see it whole. They avoid exaggeration and attempt to paint the thing as they see it for the God of things as they are.

"Your false realist—your Zola without Zola's genius who is happily going out of fashion—would paint all the ugly things he saw well enough. But he would leave out all the pretty things, and insert in their stead all the ugly things he imagined would be there. He would batten upon the vice, the wickedness, the sordidness of the world, and forget, and try to make his reader forget, that the world is, after all, a mixture, not of black and white, but of all sorts of colours and shades. Well, your real realist does not forget that. Even if he has to deal with the ugly, he does not forget that the beautiful exists. He wants truth, whether or not it squares with his philosophy. And the pursuit of truth is, to my mind, the literary quest of the Holy Grail.

"Since I did not read 'John Cave,' which was received with such an unusual chorus of hearty appreciation, I am unable to judge whether Mr. Trites has or has not advanced. Certainly his **Life** contains some amazingly clear and vivid passages. In a series of vignettes one gets a wonderful kaleidoscopic picture of Transatlantic life. . . . The young scientist who gives his life in an effort to find a cure for tetanus, the shop-girl who becomes a great actress, and the pushful store-clerk who ends as a millionaire are living figures, while the description of the bullfight, with its allegorical symbolism, is a masterpiece. I shall, for the future, watch Mr. Trites's career with interest."—A.C.W.L. in a column review in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph.*

"**Life** is unquestionably a book which should be read. We will even call it remarkable, in spite of the fact that the page of extracts from reviews of Mr. Trites's earlier book, 'John Cave,' shows that this epithet has already been bestowed upon the author at least four times."—*Bookman.*

"To Mr. Trites belongs the distinction of having written a really remarkable first novel. There was in 'John Cave' a human interest, a sense of character and a breadth of view which proclaimed the author's skill as a literary craftsman, and placed him at once in the forefront of modern fiction writers. In 'John Cave' Mr. Trites fixed our attention with unerring effect on a central and dominating character. In **Life** he has widened his canvas in keeping with his subject, and has offered us more than one study in personality, and

several excellently suggested minor figures. . . . An arresting novel which shows the sordidness and the nobility of human endeavour with many skilful touches."—*Globe.*

"The subject is handled in epic style, based on that of the French realists. The book is certainly a remarkable one, and the author has mastered the art of dramatic narrative."—*Irish Times* (Dublin).

FROM THE DAILY NEWS.

"Mr. Trites is a realist who is curiously little concerned with detail. He shows us realities, as it were, through the big end of a telescope. In this American story of money-making and love-making in strange towns, we have a number of swift far hints of a real world. We are given glimpses, now of a shop, now of a beauty parlour, now of a theatrical manager's office, but we see each of them as a remote place, and, before we have been able to examine and domesticate its details, it has disappeared. Or one might describe Mr. Trites's novel as life seen in a series of flashlights—flashlights, however, which have been carefully selected and arranged so as to have artistic meaning.

"For it is no passion for photography that has made Mr. Trites a realist. He feels, no doubt, the sheer intellectual pleasure of accurate observation. Having taken as his hero an ambitious but less than honest young shopman, Jerome S. McWade, he must have enjoyed writing such a passage as that in which he describes Jerome's energetic happiness as he rushed about the shop on a tropical morning 'with the skill and speed of an acrobat on a cramped stage.'

"'Work made him happy always. Work meant to him, however, only over-reaching, only legal theft. And the sincere happiness that radiated from his smile, being mistaken by everyone for unselfish goodwill, helped him to persuade patron after patron to reject the better articles they really wanted, and to buy instead the worse ones on which he got a good commission.'

"But it is as a dramatised comment on life, not as a chronicle of psychological and material facts, that Life is most remarkable. Like the author's previous novel, 'John Cave,' it is the comment of a hypersensitive man who has found the civilised earth something of a mistake. His novel is almost as personal as a lyric. Sensitive, like one of his characters, to 'the beauty of the sunshine, the beauty of the moonlight, the beauty of the windy tumbling sea, . . . the beauty of girls' minds and faces,' he seems to be protesting even in the most

apparently objective description against a world in which disease and cheating and meanness are enthroned.

"If drama without comment is middling literature, however, comment without drama is no better, and Mr. Trites's novel is worth serious consideration only because it expresses a sincere and personal attitude in terms of men and women who, on the whole, behave like real people and in an interesting way. Jerome McWade, the grocery clerk who learns the secret of a complexion cream, and rises through a beauty parlour business to the position of a multi-millionaire; Ford, a young man of science; and Barbara, an exquisite shop-girl who flies from slanderous tongues and finds refuge in the crowds of the city, where she wins fame as an actress, are the chief characters. And they all have a happy trick of coming out of the remote distance into reality and interesting us in their fates. One wishes at times that the epic of Jerome's fortunes were narrated with fewer omissions; it is for the most part a tale told in dots and dashes. But perhaps this sketchy and peeping sort of realism suits the author's talents best.

"Barbara Gwynne, the heroine, a poor musician's child, whose father left her nothing but his temperament, has a way of swimming into reality, like a star, and then dwindling away. Or it might be truer to say that, though a susceptible reader might easily fall in love with her beautiful mouth and eyes, she has the reality of a wraith rather than a hand-shaking human being. She is, as it were, transparent. Rather, let us say—for the word suggests the something lyrical that she personifies—she is translucent. She is a translucent being moving in a translucent world. She is real enough, however, at a crisis. She is real when, a creature of light and flowers and happy, chaste thoughts, she first finds that she has been in love with a swine. She is real again when she falls in love with Ford, who regards marriage as a slavery, and love as an illusion, and Ford is exceedingly real, too, as his logic collapses into ruins, and he finds that he cannot accept the sacrifice of Barbara.

"The pages into which Ford comes, indeed, are the most life-like in the book. Excellently imagined is the scene of the temptation when Barbara's selflessness at once betrays and protects her, Ford being as emancipated from ordinary beliefs and conventions as his counterpart, Bazaroff, in 'Fathers and Sons.' Horrible in its actuality again is the scene of Ford's dying agonies, when, having smashed a test tube filled with tetanus bacilli in his hand, he succumbs to lock-jaw. Those pages recording the progress of the disease are painful reading: one shrinks from them as from witnessing hospital horrors. One suspects that Mr. Trites may not have introduced

them with a purely artistic purpose, but in order to give an idea of the risks run by vivisectionists, whom he militantly, even shrilly, favours.

"Perhaps, on the other hand, the agonies were introduced without any propagandist bias, and in accordance with the author's general purpose of revealing the world of facts that entangles the world of men and women. He is very determined to show us life as it is, or as he imagines it is, that we may judge it for ourselves—a place of draughty gloom in which, nevertheless, a little taper light of faith may with some resolution waver. Or if he conjures up in your imagination a world of sunlight, it is a world in which monstrous insults to the sun grow thickly. Like the majority of realists he is especially conscious of the manifestation of sex in common and inappropriate places. The 'spirit of feverish and unwholesome gaiety' of the holiday makers in wood or meadow on Independence Day becomes, in his vision, 'finally a delirium wherein these middle-aged persons would manifest in strange and ugly ways a thwarted sexual excitement.' Everywhere in the garden of the world he is fascinated and repelled by the appearance of the same treacherous serpent—sex untransfigured by soul. But he does not limit his observation to ugly and evil things. His book, indeed, has plenty of light as well as shadow. It is, in the everyday phrase, a genuine slice of life—a slice of life cut a little thin, perhaps—a slice with which one may justly quarrel, as I have suggested, on the score of its transparency. But, whatever its shortcomings, it must be appreciated as a novel not written for a market, but to reveal a man's original vision of the world."

MR. ROBERT LYND in *The Daily News.*

"**Life** is a novel certainly of remarkable ability, if it be not, indeed, the work of literary genius, for even so has Mr. Trites been hailed as the author of 'John Cave.'"—*Western Morning News* (Plymouth).

"I have read **Life** with the greatest pleasure."—Mr. LINCOLN SPRINGFIELD, Editor of *London Opinion,* in *London Opinion.*

"**Life** is as well-written as novel can be."—Mr. C. E. LAWRENCE in *The Book Monthly.*

"Alive, vivid, and realistic. . . . A remarkable book."—Mr. H. B. MARRIOTT-WATSON in a column review in *The Daily Chronicle.*



